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Vassilios Christides

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Foreword

This volume presents a wide range of original papers with differences in focus from the 14th International Congress on Graeco-Oriental and African Studies which took place in Kryoneri Attikis on June 21-23, 2014. A number of these papers concentrate on the activities of the countries neighboring the Red Sea in the 6th century AD, which marks the decline of the Byzantines' hegemony in the Red Sea, and their inability to control the silk route because of the increasing power of the Sassanid Persians.[1] From their ports on the Persian Gulf, the Persians managed to secure exclusive control over the silk route trade.

The Byzantines were unable to compete with the Persians and, in a desperate effort, entrusted the task to their Christian allies the Ethiopians, whose naval power had rapidly developed by the 6th century. The Ethiopians undertook the mission to invade the Kingdom of the Himyarites in ca 525 AD, which was ruled by the Jewish king Dhu-Nuwās, a firm supporter of the Persians. Their expedition and the subjugation of the Himyarite Kingdom have been discussed by a number of authors and in the present volume some more aspects are dealt with.

Thus, in her article 'The death of King Dhu-Nuwās (ca 517-525) in the Himyarite inscriptions, Syriac, Greek and Arabic sources. His military and religious policy', Aisha Abuljadayl discusses the character and activities of the Himyarite king Dhu-Nuwās and the way he was killed by the Ethiopian invaders as described in the relevant epigraphic and literary sources. Another article by V. Christides, 'The dawn of the urbanization in the kingdom of the Himyarites in the 6th century and in the light of Byzantine hagiography', traces the emerging urbanism in the caravan city of Najrān, based mainly on the Byzantine hagiographical source *The Martyrdom of Saint Arethas and his companions*,[2] supplemented by parts of the *Acts of Saint Gregentius*,[3] another rather controversial Byzantine hagiographical source. Christides emphasizes the importance of the Byzantine hagiographical works which furnish unique details that supplement the archaeological and epigraphic evidence.

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1 V. Christides, 'What went wrong in the long distance Roman naval power in the Red Sea and in the Indian Ocean in the late third century AD', in *Graeco-Latina et Orientalia Studia in honorem Angeli Urbani heptagenarii*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir & Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (Syro-Araqbica, 2) Cordoba: Oriens Academic, 2013, pp. 63-86; id., 'Roman and Byzantine Naval Power in Decline in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 95 (2013), pp. 80-106.

2 *Le Martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (BHG 166)*, ed. Marina Detoraki, trans. Joëlle Beaucamp (Monographies, 27. Le massacre de Najrān I), Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2007.

3 Albrecht Berger, ed. and trans., *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006.

Of particular importance is Christian Julien Robin's article 'La Grande Église d'Abraha à Ṣan'ā'. Quelques remarques sur son emplacement, ses dimensions et sa date' concerning the Christian church known as 'Qalis'. It was built in South Arabia by the king of the Himyarites, Abraha, an Ethiopian general of humble origin who had participated in the Ethiopian invasion of the Himyarite Kingdom in ca 525 AD. Splendidly completing the archaeological evidence with the epigraphic, Robin persuasively specifies the time of its building and its exact location.

In addition to the above articles, two more are relevant to the turbulent Red Sea and the silk trade. F. de Romanis' article 'Trajan's Canal and the Logistics of Late Antiquity India Trade', explores the itinerary of the trade along the silk route which started in the Nile river in Egypt. Eivind Heldaas Seland's work, 'Shipwreck, monsters and maroons: The hazards of ancient Red Sea navigation', describes the perilous conditions of sailing in the Red Sea.

The volume includes two more significant articles. The first by Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, 'Lakhmids against Ghassanids in the late 6th c. CE. Qābūs b. al-Mundhir defeats al-Mundhir b. Ḥārith b. Jabala. A pre-Islamic episode rendered into Arabic from Syriac', meticulously deals with the edition, translation and study of an interesting *Karshūnī* text rendered from a Syriac original about an intertribal Arabic conflict in the *limes arabicus*. In the second, 'Pax aethiopica, diplomatic missions and immunity in Nubia and Ethiopia (2^{nd} -middle 6^{th} century AD)', Ben Hendrickx reports the employment of experienced diplomats by the Byzantine at the time of Justinian (6^{th} c.) in order to secure a *Pax Byzantina* with the Nubians and Ethiopians.

Lastly, M. Galenianos' article, 'The Christology of Saint Gregentius, archbishop of Taphar', discusses the question whether the alleged Saint Gregentius was Monophysite or Orthodox, favoring the latter.

It is hoped that all the articles of this volume will contribute to a better understanding of the interwoven relations among Romans, Greeks, Ethiopians and Arabs in the Near East during the Pre-Islamic Times.

Vassilios Christides
Director of the Institute for Graeco-Oriental and African Studies

The death of king Dhū Nuwās (ca 517-525 CE) in the Himyarite inscriptions, Syriac, Greek and Arabic sources: his military and religious policy*

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One of the most intriguing personalities in the pre-Islamic history of South Arabia is that of the king Dhū Nuwās, who ruled the Himyarite Kingdom from ca 517 to 525. Almost all our knowledge of this king is gleaned from the biased Syriac and Byzantine Christian hagiographical sources and it is only through the short but invaluable epigraphic evidence and the later Arabic sources that we can acquire a clearer picture about his shrouded motivation during his reign and struggle against the Ethiopians (ca AD 525).

Before entering a discussion of the activities of this king, a short account concerning his name and religion will be presented. His exact name was Zur'ah Dhū Nuwās and the name of his family was Yazā' in the old Yamani language, equal to the name Yazīd in Arabic; his surname, Dhū Nuwās, is usually interpreted, but not accepted by all scholars, as "the man with the dangling forelock long hair".[1] Another name added to Dhū Nuwās was that of Yūsuf, which was attached to him after his conversion to Judaism since, as it will be seen further in this study, he was not a born Jew. In the Syriac source, known as *The Book of the Himyarites*, the Jewish king of the Himyarites, who ruled the country in ca 525, appears with the name Masrūq,[2] a name which is also reported in the other relevant Syriac sources.[3]

In the Byzantine hagiographical sources his name is transliterated as the declinable name Δουναάς, or the indeclinable name Δουναάν.[4] Although in the

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* I would like to thank 'The Center of Human Study Research' of King Saud University for their financial support.

1 *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*, vol. V, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*. Translated and annotated by C. E. Bosworth, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 190, n. 483

2 *The Book of the Himyarites*, edition and translation Axel Moberg, Lund – London – Paris - Leipzig: C. W. K. Gleerup - Oxford University Press - Édouard Champion - Otto Harrassowitz, 1924, p. xcii.

3 The most important supplementary Syriac source is the so-called *Letters*.

4 *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, edition and translation Albrecht Berger, Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006, section 9, l. 3, p.382: Δουναάς. *Le Martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (BHG 166)*, ed. Marina Detoraki, trans. Joëlle Beaucamp,

Acts of St. Gregentius his Jewish name, Yūsuf, does not appear, it is usually emphasized that he is a Jew.[5]

Dhū Nuwās' reign (ca 517-525) is characterized by a perpetual struggle against the Ethiopians during the rule of Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa, his contemporary king of the Ethiopians (AD 493-535).[6] In the Byzantine hagiographical sources, his name appears as 'Ελεσβαὰς[7] or 'Ελεσβοὰμ[8] or other similar transliterations.[9] In the Syriac sources, his name appears as Kālēb.[10] In general, the Byzantine hagiographical sources solely use the above mentioned transliterated name of Dhū Nuwās[11] and that of of Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa.

In the Himyarite inscriptions Dhū Nuwās' name usually appears as Yūsuf As'ar Yatha'r (Ys′f 's′r (y) ṯ' (r).[12] This name appears prominently in the famous inscription Ja 1028 which, as Christian Robin describes, is a dramatic description of the persecution of the Christians in Najrān which led to a bloody struggle between the Himyarites and the Ethiopians, ending with the victory of the latter.[13] The inscription, in a straightforward manner, reports that Yūsuf As'ar Yatha'r undertook a murderous persecution of the Christians in the Kingdom of the Himyarites, starting from its capital Ẓafār where he burnt its church. He killed the Ethiopian guards who controlled the city and proceeded towards the coastline devastating the countryside,[14] massacring 12,000 Christian Himyarites and capturing 11,000.

(Monographies, 27), Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2007, §1, l. 7, p. 185: Δουναάν.

5 *Acts*, Bios, section 10, l. 69, p. 410: ὁ τῶν 'Εβραίων βασιλεὺς; *Acts*, Bios, section 9, l. 145, p. 394: Ιουδαῖος.

6 S. H. Sellassie, *Ancient and medieval Ethiopian history to 1270*, Addis Ababa, 1972, p. 123.

7 *Martyrdom*, §1, l. 6, p. 185.

8 *Acts*, Bios section 6, l. 141, p. 338.

9 V. Christides, 'The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 AD)', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 9 (1972), p. 123.

10 *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. cvi.

11 It is noteworthy that the contemporary Byzantine author Cosmas Indicopleustes uses the best transliteration, i.e. 'Ελλατζβάας; see *Cosmas Indicopleustès, Topographie chrétienne*, vol. I (books I-IV), ed. and trans. Wanda Wolska-Conus, Les Éditions du Cerf: Paris, 1968, Book II, §56, l. 4, p. 369.

12 For Dhū Nuwās in general see A. F. L. Beeston, 'The Realm of King Yūsuf (Dhu Nuwas)', *Bulletin of the Schools of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1975), pp. 124-126; see also C. J. Robin, 'Joseph, dernier roi de Ḥimyar (de 522 à 525, ou une des années suivantes)', *Jerusalem Studies on Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008), pp. 1-124, not available to me.

13 See a translation of this inscription with a short commentary by C. Robin in 'Du paganisme au monothéisme', *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 61 (1991), p. 154.

14 A short comprehensive account of the relevant historical events appear in Robin, 'Du paganisme au monothéisme', p. 152; see also the basic Greek, Syriac and Arabic sources in Robin, 'Arabia and Ethiopia', in *The Oxford Handbook o Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 252-254. Other relevant studies appear further in this paper.

The inscription enumerates in detail the Himyrite tribes which endorsed and supported Dhū Nuwās' activities, i.e. the Yaz'anides, along with those from Kinda, Murād and Madhij, and dates this tragic event to the Himyarite year 633 that corresponds to the year 523 AD.[15]

Another inscription describes how Dhū Nuwās undertook a well organized expedition to exterminate the Christians of the Himyarite Kingdom on the coastline, reaching the city Najrān in the interior.[16]

Ignoring the general situation that prevailed in the Kingdom of the Himyarites at the time of the Christian persecution, the biased Byzantine and Syriac hagiographical sources blame King Dhū Nuwās as the sole culprit who initiated the persecution of the Christians of Najrān and the ensuing struggle between the Himyarite Jews and Christians because he hated Christianity. Instead the mention of the slaughtering of the Ethiopian garrison in Ẓafār reveals that the main reason was the local reaction to a foreign agent settled in the capital of the Himyrite Kingdom, controlling the state. Both the *Martyrdom* and the *Acts of St. Gregentius*, using the same vocabulary, call King Dhū Nuwās with derogatory appellations such as αἱμοβόρος (bloodthirsty) and παράνομος (unlawful).[17] In *The Book of the Himyarites*, a stronger insulting appellation was used, i.e. "shedder of innocent blood".[18] It is of particular interest that both Greek sources, the *Martyrdom* and the *Acts*, in most of their references to Dhu -Nuwās' name, attach the term παράνομος (i.e. unlawful). It should be noted that in contrast to Ryckman's view, Robin points out that in the Himyarite inscriptions, his lawful succession to the throne is not clearly shown, in spite of the Arabic tradition, and it is not improbable that he actually usurped the throne unlawfully.[19]

One more term used for Dhū Nuwās in the Byzantine hagiographical sources is that of a Jew, Ἑβραῖος or Ἰουδαῖος, which actually is not applied as a derogatory term but as an indication for Dhū Nuwās' religion.[20] True, the author of the *Martyrdom* states at the beginning of his narration that the Jewish inhabitants of the Himyarite Kingdom did not follow the proper rules of the [Jewish] Law, but a

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15 Robin, 'Du paganisme au monothéisme', p. 151, places this event in the year 523 AD.; see also J. Beaucamp, F. Briquel-Chatonnet and C. J. Robin, 'La persécution des chrétiens de Nagran et la chronologie himyarite', ARAM 11 (1999-2000), pp. 15-83.

16 For the massacre of the Christians in the coastline town Muhwan, see J. P. Monferrer-Sala, *Redefining History on Pre-Islamic Accounts*, (Eastern Christian Studies, 26), Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010, p. 21; Maxime Rodinson, 'Sur une nouvelle inscription du règne de Dhoû Nowâs', *Bibliotheca orientalis* 26:1-2 (1969), pp. 26-34.

17 *Martyrdom*, §1, l. 7-8, p. 185; §37, l. 18, p. 281. *Acts*, Bios, section 5, l. 96, p. 306; section 9, l. 144, p. 394; section 9, l. 152, p. 394.

18 *Book of the Himyarites*, p. cxxxiv.

19 Robin, 'Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar', *Arabica* 1 (2003), p. 146.

20 *Martyrdom*, §1, l. 7, p. 185. *Acts*, Bios, section 5, l. 96, p. 306.

distortion of it.[21] This remark seems valid since from all the relevant sources it is clear that the Himyarite Jews did not follow the well known traditional Judaism which, in addition to the theoretical religious content, includes some obligatory everyday practices, as for example dietary restrictions, change of names, etc. It is for this reason that Robin calls it "un judaïsme plus ḥimyarite que juif".[22]

Taking into consideration the fluidity of the superficial type of Judaism which the Himyarites practiced in the Himyarite Kingdom in the 6th century, we can assume that Dhū Nuwās' Judaism must have been rather superficial and according to the present author's view, he converted to Judaism for a practical purpose,[23] i.e. in order to strengthen his political power by inspiring religious fervor to his Himyarite followers, counterbalancing the zeal of his Christian enemies, the Ethiopians. Thus, in order to counterbalance Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa's adopted Christianity in order to invade and conquer South Arabia, Dhū Nuwās converted to Judaism so as to obtain the strong support of the Himyarite Jews against the Ethiopians who coveted his country.[24] It should be noted that the Ethiopians had already invaded South Arabia as early as the first century AD, as is attested in a royal inscription found in Axum and dated to this period,[25] and they returned in the 6th century motivated again by an expansion into the Arabian Peninsula under the pretext of Christianity.[26]

In addition to his Jewish supporters, Dhū Nuwās had constantly the strong automatic support of a large number of tribes and their leaders, i.e. the Yazan, Kinda, Khawlan, etc. Thus, the great persecution of the Christians of the Himyarite Kingdom, attested by Ja 1028, which started from the capital Ẓafār and expanded through the whole country, reaching Ḥadramawt in the south and Najrān towards the North, was not a simple action of retaliation against the Christian Ethiopians who invaded the Himyarite Kingdom and settled a garrison in the capital Ẓafār, but a self- defense action to get rid of the internal enemies while expecting the Ethiopians to return.

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21 *Martyrdom*, §1, l. 11, p. 185.

22 Robin, 'Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar', p. 151; Iwona Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar à l'époque monothéiste*, (Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 40), Paris, 2009, p. 239: "judaïsant mais pas exactement juif". V. Christides, 'Authenticity and Imagination: The Martyrdom of St. Arethas and the Acts of St. Gregentius. New Light on the Himyarite Kingdom on the Eve and after the Ethiopian Dominance in the 6th century', forthcoming.

23 According to Robin, he was not a born Jew but a converted one; 'Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar', pp. 146-147.

24 A similar view concerning Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa's motive for invading South Arabia appears in Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, p. 103, who believes that Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa was just waiting for an excuse to invade South Arabia.

25 B. Hendrickx, *Official documents written in Greek illustrating the ancient history of Nubia and Ethiopia (3rd century BC - 6th century AD)*, Johannesburg: Institute for Afro-Hellenic Studies, 1984, pp. 45-46.

26 Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, note 24, above.

Dhū Nuwās' Judaism, as correctly point out by Ch. Robin, was only a partial acceptance of conversion to the Jewish religion,[27] which included, in general, obligatory endorsement of every day dietary practices, change of names, marriages exclusively with co-religious persons, etc.[28] It is the present author's view that Dhū Nuwās' religious attachment to Judaism did not isolate him from his tribal and ethnic attachment to his country but instead it enhanced his ethnic policy to resist the aggressiveness of the Ethiopians who, in the name of Christianity, taking profit of the great upheaval caused by Dhu Nuwās' persecution of the Christians, organized a gigantic amphibian expedition ca. the year 525 AD in order to reestablish Christianity in the Himyarite Kingdom but in reality to enforce its tax subordination to Ethiopia.

The preparation of the gigantic amphibious expedition and its hazardous sailing from the port of Adulis to the coastline of South Arabia is described with meticulous details solely by the Greek hagiographical source the *Martyrdom of St. Arethas*, which is actually the only source that illuminates every aspect of the military tactics followed by both rivals in this seaborne expedition which ended with the Ethiopians' victory. [29]

A detailed description of the military aspects of this conflict is beyond the scope of the present work whose focus is concentrated on the final stage, the death of Dhū Nuwās. Dhū Nuwas, as the inscriptions report, had organized the coastline defense well, strengthening all the Himyarite fortifications, especially those of Ḥusn al-Ghurāb, and even constructing a protective chain near the port of Bāb al-Mandab.[30] According to the *Martyrdom*, the Ethiopian transportation

[27] Robin, 'Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar', pp. 146-147.

[28] As noted by V. Christides, it is only in the *Acts of St. Gregentius* that there are complete references to such practices by the Himyarite Jews, i.e. living in special quarters in *Najrān* and practicing marriages with only their co-religious members; see Christides, 'The dawn of urbanization in the Kingdom of the Himyarites in the 6th century in the light of Byzantine hagiography', in the present volume; id., 'Authenticity and Imagination: The Martyrdom of St. Arethas and the Acts of St. Gregentius reconsidered', forthcoming.

[29] For a comprehensive account of this conflict, see Christides, 'The dawn of urbanization in the Kingdom of the Himyarites in the 6th century in the light of Byzantine hagiography', in the present volume; id., 'Authenticity and Imagination: the Martyrdom of St. Arethas and the Acts of St. Gregentius. New Light on the Himyarite Kingdom on the Eve and after the Ethiopian Dominance in the 6th century AD', forthcoming. Christides' view is that the *Martyrdom* is not only useful for the study of the Ethiopian-Himyarite conflict in the 6th c. AD but also indispensable in illuminating navigation in the Red Sea at this period, completing the evidence of epigraphy and archaeology.

[30] For this chain see *Martyrdom*, §32, l. 6, 269. See also Beeston, 'The Chain of al-Mandab', in *On Both Sides of al-Mandab. Ethiopian, South Arabic and Islamic studies presented to Oscar Lögfren on His 90th birthday*, Stockholm: Svenska Forskningsinstitutet i Istanbul, 1989, pp. 1-6; id., 'Two Bi'r Ḥimā Inscriptions Reexamined', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48[1] (1985), pp. 50-51.

ships carrying the troops approached the Arabian coastline, divided into three parts.[31]

The Death of Dhū Nuwās: a criminal or a hero?

The personality of Dhū Nuwās inspired controversial interpretations as they are vividly expressed in the Greek, Syriac and Arabic sources. Some of them present him as a cruel tyrant who ruthlessly persecuted the Christians of his kingdom and others as a heroic Himyarite patriot who fell victim to his ethnic anti-Ethiopian activities. Accordingly, his killing is described in the sources in various controversial ways. In general, they can be classified in the following four categories: (a) simple direct references without any details concerning the way he was killed; (b) description of Dhū Nuwās' violent execution by his Ethiopian enemies; (c) Dhū Nuwās' strangulation by Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa; (d) Dhū Nuwās' killing in the battlefield; (e) the heroic death of Dhū Nuwās (death by suicide); (f) the theory of conspiracy; (g) a realistic description of the death of Dhū Nuwās by an Ethiopian fighter.

(a) Simple direct references without any details concerning the way he was killed

Gajda reports that there are two inscriptions reporting the killing of Dhū Nuwās. The first found in Mārib in Yemen is an Ethiopian inscription RIÉ 195,[32] which reports the Ethiopian invasion of South Arabia in ca 525 AD, the capture of Himyarite prisoners and the fall of the capital Ẓafār during which the palace was burnt and the king of the Himyarites was killed without any explanation by what means.[33] It is of particular interest that Dhū Nuwās, who is understood without being named, was arrested along with others and his palace was burnt.

Another inscription from South Arabia mentioned by Gajda is the CIH 621, dated to the Himyarite year 640 corresponding to February 530 AD and found in Māwiyat, the fortress Ḥusn al-Ghurāb near the port of Qānī' in the most southern part of South Arabia, located in the entrance of the silk route.[34] Actually this inscription does not mention the death of Dhū Nuwās explicitly, but reports the

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31 *Martyrdom*, §32, l. 6, p. 269. See also Christides, 'The Martyrdom of Arethas and the Days after: History vs. Hagiography', *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 (2000), p. 86, fig. 6.

32 Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, p. 107.

33 Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*; *Acts*, note 403.

34 For this port see my article 'Christian Fortresses-Churches in the Ports of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean: the Cases of Klysma (Qulzum) in Egypt and Qānī' in Southern Arabia', *Graeco-Arabica* 12, forthcoming.

killing of a "Himyarite king" by the Ethiopians who had invaded the Himyarite kingdom. According to Gajda, those who wrote this inscription had assumed to write it after the death of Dhū Nuwās while they had undertaken to fortify Ḥusn al-Ghurāb. Their leader was Sumu-Yafā, who later became the successor king of the Himyarites.[35] Unfortunately, this rather enigmatic inscription does not mention how Dhu Nuwas died.

(b) Description of Dhū Nuwās' violent execution by his Ethiopian enemies. Execution by sword

The violent death of Dhū Nuwās as a punishment after his arrest appears in the *Acts of St. Gregentius*[36] It is mentioned that the Ethiopian king Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa fought against Dhū Nuwās "by land and sea..." and "arrested the unlawful Hebrew himself together with his relatives and executed them by the sword". The text continues reporting the sack of Ẓafār, the capture of the Himyarites and the killing of Dhu Nuwas together with his relatives, reporting that "he was executed by sword". It should be noted that execution by sword was used for the Christian martyrs.[37]

(c) Dhū Nuwās' strangulation by Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa

The *Martyrdom* provides us with some details about Dhū Nuwās' capture by the Ethiopians and his killing. It describes how the main part of the Ethiopian army, without their king, managed to disembark successfully on the Arabian coastline, but offers no details about the ensuing land battle in which part of the Ethiopian army was utterly defeated. It reports abruptly that Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa managed to land in a different area and from there went to Ẓafār, where he imprisoned Dhū Nuwās along with some of his relatives. There, he strangled Dhū Nuwās and his relatives with his own hands.[38]

It is indeed surprising that Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa, who is called in the *Martyrdom* "most lawful"[39] and the "servant of God",[40] is presented as a murderer who used his own hands to kill. It is noteworthy that in one of the Arabic versions of the *Martyrdom*,

35 Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, p. 108.

36 *Acts*, Bios 9, l. 22-23, text p. 384. Berger's English translation, p. 385. It is also reported in the attached *Synaxarion*, Acts, appendix I, l. 47, text p. 806; Berger's translation, p. 807.

37 For details about this type of execution see K. Charalambides, *Ο αποκεφαλισμός των μαρτύρων εις τας ιστορικοφιλολογικάς πηγάς και την βυζαντινής τέχνην*, Athens: Kardamitsa, 1989.

38 The text reports literarily ἰδίαις χερσὶν (with his own hands), *Martyrdom*, §37, l. 17, 18, p.281.

39 *Martyrdom*, §1, l. 6, p. 185.

40 *Martyrdom*, §29, l. 1, p. 263.

it is reported that Dhū Nuwās was seated in his throne (*sarīr*), accompanied by his nobles, in the city of Saba, where Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa arrested him and beheaded him.[41] Obviously, the author of the *Martyrdom*, who in general provides us with valid information, fabricated this imaginary scene of strangulation which does not appear in any other source. Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa appears in the Ethiopian sources as a pious king and a saint. It is also known that he encouraged the translation of the Bible, as well as some other ecclesiastical texts, into the Ethiopic language.[42]

(d) Killed in the battlefield

The 11th century author Michael the Syrian, epitomizing the information of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tell Mahrē and other Syriac sources, simply reports that Dhu Nuwās "was killed in the battlefield".[43]

(e) The Heroic Death of Dhū Nuwās (Death by suicide)

Ṭabarī has preserved a rather romanticized death of Dhū Nuwās, whom he describes as "fine and handsome with an attractive appearance and intelligence".[44] According to him, Dhū Nuwās attempted to organize a strong resistance against the invading army of Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa, whom he calls Aryāt, on the coastline of South Arabia, where the Ethiopian army had landed, but his army was finally defeated and routed.[45] "Hence, when Dhū Nuwās saw what had befallen him and his supporters, he headed his horse towards the sea; he whipped it onward and rode into the sea, bearing him through the shallows until it carried him into the deep water". [46] Similarly, Ya'qūbī (9th century) reports that when Dhū Nuwās and his forces were defeated and annihilated, whipped his horse onward his horse and both were lost in the sea.[47]

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41 Monferrer-Sala, *Redefining History on Pre-Islamic Accounts*, p. 78.
42 Y. M. Kobishchanov, *Axum*, Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1966 (ed. J. W. Michels, trans. Lorraine T. Kapitanoff, University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979, p. 97).
43 *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, éditée pour la premier fois et traduit en français par Jean-Baptiste Chabot, vol. II, Paris, 1901, p. 185.
44 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. and annot. Bosworth, p. 190.
45 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. and annot. Bosworth, p. 207.
46 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. and annot. Bosworth, p. 207.
47 Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, vol. I, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l Nashr, 1995, pp. 199-200.

(f) The Theory of Conspiracy

Finally Ṭabarī reports that according to Ibn Hisām (c.), Dhū Nuwās's resistance to the Ethiopian army was undermined by tribal rivalries which led him, while he was in San'a, to commit suicide riding into the sea on his horse.[48]

(g) A Realistic Description of the Death of Dhū Nuwās killed by an Ethiopian Fighter

In spite of his strong religious inclination towards the Christians and his hostility towards the Jews, the author of the *Book of the Himyarites* frequently describes the historical events realistically and provides us with a pragmatic description of the death of Dhū Nuwās during the land battle between the Himyarites and the Ethiopians on the seashore where the Ethiopians had landed. He reports that a brave Ethiopian fighter persecuted Dhū Nuwās, who was running away (probably on horseback), caught him and killed him without knowing that he was the king of the Himyarites and as soon as he realized it, "he dragged it [the body] quickly into the water [to the shore]...".[49]

Thus, the narration of the *Book of the Himyarites* indicates that the information of the Arabic sources that Dhū Nuwās was killed while he was on horseback during the land battle between the Ethiopian invaders and the Himyarites on the seashore is most probably correct, embellished with the romantic addition of Dhū Nuwās' suicide in the waters of the sea.

Conclusions

The general conclusion we can draw beyond any doubt is that the Greek and Syriac hagiographical sources – in their one-sided approach to the historical events of the time- project the religious antagonism between Judaism and Christianity as the main cause of the Himyarite-Ethiopian conflict. This conflict ended with the defeat of the Himyarites and the tragic death of their champion Dhū Nuwās, also called Masruq, who fell in the battlefield during the desperate encounter of his army with the Ethiopian invading army under the leadership of their king Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa in ca 525 AD.

The present author believes that one important remark we can draw is that for the hagiographical sources there are just two monolithic powers in the

[48] *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. and annot. Bosworth, pp. 211-212.

[49] *Book of the Himyarites*, p. cxxxv.

Himyarite kingdom at this period, the Christian Himyarites and the Jewish Himyarites, while there were also a number of pagans and *hulafā*. Their number not only in the cities of Ẓafār and Najrān but also in the provinces is unknown. Moreover, the role of the tribes in the Himyarite-Ethiopian war needs to be thoroughly examined. From the historical sources, no doubt the short reference of Procopius, the par excellence historian of Justinian, illuminates us about the great anxiety of Byzantines to secure a steady foot in the Himyarite land in order to safeguard their commercial activities.[50]

The death of Dhū Nuwās marked the beginning of a new era in the development of the Himyarite Kingdom which was transformed to a tributary state of Ethiopia. Undoubtedly, it was at this period that we can trace an anti-Ethiopian reaction of the Himyarites which is mirrored in the Arabic sources. As a result, Dhū Nuwās' death was glorified and he was transformed into a symbol of anti-Ethiopian resistance by the Himyarities. In spite of his cruelty, he was a vigorous opponent to the Ethiopian dominance, but his fame exceeded his activities.[51]

I believe that the period following the death of Dhū Nuwās and the dominance of the Ethiopians over South Arabia justifies his hostile attitude towards Christian Ethiopia. Of course, his cruel behavior towards the Christian Himyarites neither can be accepted nor did it bring any lasting practical benefits. The death of Dhū Nuwās was immediately followed by his replacement of Sumu-Yafā, a puppet king, servile to the Ethiopians who was selected by Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa himself. He was a member of the royal Himiyarite family, thus a legitimate ruler without any actual power although he bore the title of the king.[52] It is noteworthy that the name of this king appears neither in the Byzantine nor the Arabic sources. Instead, Abraha, who overturned Sumu-Yafā by a military coup and ruled autocratically, is reported as an immediate glorious successor. Obviously, as proposed by V. Christides,[53] the Byzantine authors avoided mentioning the intermediate turbulent state that preceded the enthronement of Abraha, in order to

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50 B. Hendrickx, *Official Documents*, pp. 69-74. For the Byzantines' attitude towards the Himyarite-Ethiopian conflict, see Sophia Patoura, *Christianity and Globality in Early Byzantium from Theory to Practice*, (Monographs, 10), Athens: The National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, 2008; D. G. Letsios, 'Die Äthiopisch-Himyaritischen Kriege des 6. Jahrhunderts und die Christianisierung Äthiopiens', *Jahrbuch des Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 41 (1991), pp. 25-41. Monferrer-Sala, *Redefining History on Pre-Islamic Accounts*, p. 67.

51 I did not include in this study the reference to Robin's article, 'Joseph, dernier roi de Ḥimyar (de 522 à 525, ou une des années suivantes)', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008), pp. 1-124.

52 In all relevant Greek sources, the title "king" (βασιλεύς) applied to the king of Himyarites, Ethiopians and Byzantines. See for example, *Martyrdom*, §1, l. 7, l. 17; §38, l. 6: βασιλεύς Ὁμηριτῶν, Αἰθιόπων, βασιλεύς Ιουστίνος.

53 Christides, 'The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 AD)', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 9 (1972), pp. 128-129.

emphasize the ideal peaceful situation prevailing in the Himyarite kingdom after the dead of Dhū Nuwās.

Epilogue

The Ethiopian-Arabian Struggle (ca 525 AD), a non-Religious War

The author wants to emphasize that the exclusive emphasis of the Greek and Syriac hagiographical works concerning the religious antagonism between Christianity and Judaism in South Arabia in ca 525 AD does not reflect the real conflict. Especially the *Acts of St. Gregentius*, whose core was composed in the 6th century, rewritten repeatedly with additions through centuries, describes this conflict as if South Arabia in the 6th century were inhabited by Christians and Jews exclusively, manipulated by the Church of Alexandria. The *Acts* reports even on the dominance of the Church over South Arabia, which supposedly imposed a religious legislation written by archbishop Gregentius, known as "Laws of Gregentius", on all inhabitants of the kingdom of the Himyarites.[54]

The careful study of all relevant inscriptions, especially a-Jam 1028, Ry 508 & Ry 507 (Ja 102, July 633/AD 523, Ry 507, July 633/AD523, cf. Ry 508), reveals that in reality this conflict was rooted in previous conflicts between Ethiopia and South Arabia, which can be traced to the 1st century AD.

It should be noted here that a special passage of the *Martyrdom of St. Arethas and his companions* demonstrates that not only pagans, Jews and Christians lived side by side by the 6th century AD, but moreover they were not solely involved in hostilities but shared some common feelings. This passage describes how a wealthy lady, who belonged to one of the greatest South Arabian families, just before she was executed by Dhū Nuwās, appealed for help and understanding to all her women co-habitants as if they were all members of one nation: "Honorable free women who share the same spirit as well as those of you who are Jews and pagans, listen to me...".[55]

Finally, it should be noted that in spite of the passing of many centuries, a number of folk stories and a folk epic of the 14th century report on the bitter feelings of the people of South Arabia towards the Ethiopian aggressiveness.[56]

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54 *Acts*, Nomoi (Laws), pp. 411-449. For the acceptance of these laws see A. N. Papathanasiou, *Οι «Νόμοι των Ομηριτών»*, Athens-Komotene: Ant. N. Sakkoula, 1994, *passim*.

55 *Martyrdom*, αβδε, §11, p. 215, Greek text: Γυναῖκες σεμναὶ καὶ ἐλεύθεραι, ὁμόφρονές μου, καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν οὖσαι ἰουδαῖαί τε καὶ ἑλληνίδες, ἀκούσατέ μου τῶν λόγων.

56 Ṯurayya Manqūš, *Sayf b. Ḏī Yazan, bayn al-ḥaqīqa wa'l-usṭūra*, Baghdad: Dār al-Ḥurriyya, 1980.

To sum up, the author believes that her concrete study on the various ways of Dhū Nuwās' death, which has not hitherto studied elsewhere, can contribute greatly to the study of this turbulent period in general.

Appendix

It is worth mentioning here how the death of Dhū Nuwās was immortalized by the Yemenite poet 'Alqamah Dhu Jadan, who belonged to the famous tribe of Dhu Yazan whose power extended all over the area of South Arabia.

Arabic text[57]

أو ما سمعت بقيل حمير يوسف   أكل الثعالف لحمه لم يقبر
ورأى بأن الموت خير عنده   من أن يدين لاسود أو احمر

Translation

> "Have you heard about the Himyarite leader Yūsuf? The shark ate his flesh which was not buried. And he preferred to die rather than fall into the hands of a black (African–Ethiopian) man or of a red (meaning a Byzantine)".

It is noteworthy that the word ثعالف is not Arabic but it is a Himyarite word. There is another verse by another poet of the same idea:[58]

أو ذو نواس حافر الأخدود في   نجران لم يخش احتيال جناح
ألقى النصارى في نيار أججت   بوقود جمر مضرم بلقاح
فدعا له ذو ثعلبان أحابشا   منهم بقاع الارض غير ضواح
فتقحم البحر العميق بنفسه   وسلاحه وجواده السباح
فغدا طعاما بعد عز باذخ   للحوت من نون ومن تمساح

This verse has the same meaning as the previous one saying that Dhū Nuwās committed suicide by walking into the deep sea wearing his arm, riding his horse. He was eaten by the sharks as well as by the crocodiles.

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57 Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *al-Awā'il*, ed. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī and Walīd Qaṣṣāb, Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1975, I, p. 28.

58 Nashwān b. Sa'īd al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Qaṣīdah al-ḥimyariyyah wa-sharḥuhā al-musammā Khulāṣat al-sīrah al-jāmi'ah li-ajā'ib akhbār al-mulūk al-tabābi'ah*, ed. 'Alī al-Mu'ayyid and Ismā'īl al-Jarrāfī, Beirut: Dār al-Mawdah, 1978, p. 148.

In the third verse the change of the letter ث of the Himyarite word الثعالف to the Arabic letter ب will change the whole meaning and the indication of the poem:

أو ما سمعت بقتل حمير يوسفا   أكل الثعالب لحمه لم يقبر

"Have you heard that the Himyarite (people) assassinated Yusuf (Dhū Nuwās)? And as a result he was eaten by the foxes and he was not buried".

According to the theory of conspiracy supported by some scholars, Dhū Nuwās was assassinated by his own tribes men and not by the Ethiopians or he committed suicide.

Thus, we can end up demonstrating how on the one hand, the Christian hagiographical sources present the Himyarite-Ethiopian conflict of ca 525 clearly as a religious war, and on the other hand, the Arabic sources present this war as strictly national. Of course, the financial and political implications involving the great powers of the time, Persia and Byzantium, should be taken into consideration.

The dawn of the urbanization in the kingdom of the Himyarites in the 6th century and in the light of Byzantine hagiography*

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Outline

The aim of this article is to stress the importance of two Byzantine hagiographical works, i.e. the *Martyrdom of Saint Arethas and his Companions*[1] (*MA*) and the *Acts of Saint Gregentius*[2] (*Acts*), which yield much needed insight into the military conflict between Ethiopians and Himyarites at the turn of the 6th century. They also provide useful information for the study of the socio-political situation in the Kingdom of the Himyarites in South Arabia on the eve of its conquest by the Ethiopians and afterwards from early 6th c. AD to ca 570 AD, the date of its conquest by the Persians.

In spite of its monolithic focus on the heroic resistance of the Christians of the Himyarite district of Najrān against their Jewish king Dhu Nuwās, the *MA* reveals valuable information about the military conflict between the Himyarites and the Ethiopians who invaded and conquered the Himyarite kingdom ca 525 AD. In particular, the MA's description of the naval preparedness of the Ethiopians and the details of their amphibious expedition which ended in their victory are of unique importance since they are not described in detail in any other source and, in general, they enhance our knowledge of navigation in the Red Sea in pre-Islamic times, completing the information of archaeology and epigraphy.

In addition, the *MA* provides scattered valuable references to the socio-political situation of the Himyarite Kingdgom in the 6th century in correlation

* This article was written in Bergen of Norway during my stay at the University of Bergen as a visiting scholar (September 2014). A small productive colloquium on the countries around the Red Sea in Late Antiquity, organized by Prof. Eivind Heldaas Seland, enhanced my research and contributed to a better understanding of the historical situation in this area.

1 *Le Martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (BHG 166)*, ed. Marina Detoraki, trans. Joëlle Beaucamp, (Monographies, 27), Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2007 (hereafter *MA*).

2 Albrect Berger, ed. and trans., *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006.

with the parallel information found in the second hagiographical work, the *Acts*. It was at the time that Najrān, the caravan city of the Himyarite Kingdom second in importance after the capital Ẓafār, was changing into a semi-urbanized town where the chiefs of the local tribes were settled, creating a rural elite. The authors of both the *MA* and the *Acts* attribute various pompous Byzantine titles to this local elite, i.e. "ἐθνάρχης", "συγκλητικός", etc., which only vaguely coincide with the actual titles. It is only the title of "ἐθνάρχης" borne by the martyr Arethas (Ḥarith bn. Kā 'b) that can be interpreted as "governor" of the city-state of Najrān [and chief of the local independent army].

The *Acts*, whose authenticity has been repeatedly challenged[3] (see appendix A), not only provide the above corroborating evidence but also substantially illuminate the dark period which followed the Ethiopian conquest of the Kingdom of the Himyarites, in particular the fate of the Jewish Himyarites.
Suffice it to mention here that the original narration of the *Acts* was undoubtedly created before the expansion of Islam in South Arabia. No doubt the original text of both the *MA* and the *Acts*, especially the latter, was augmented with additions and alterations through a long period of transmission until they reached their present form.
A. Berger's effort to try to discover the Islamic presence in the *Acts*, based on an isolated mention of a single word, the term "Agarēnoi",[4] is easily rejected since it was used for both the pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabs. Actually, the unknown author of the *Acts* emphatically reports that during the period of the Ethiopian dominance in South Arabia, no foreign nation around it dared attack it.[5]

Introduction

The early 6th century AD, in particular the year ca 525, marks a turning point in the history of the countries neighboring the Red Sea. The impressive spirit of free international navigation in this turbulent sea at that time, which prevailed in spite of the intense trade competition between the Sassanid Persians and the

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3 A detailed analysis of the authenticity of the MA and the Acts has been undertaken by the present author in a forthcoming article, "Authenticity and Imagination: The Martyrdom of St. Arethas and the Acts of St. Gregentius. New Light on the Himyarite Kingdom on the Eve and after the Ethiopian Dominance in the 6th Century AD".

4 Berger (ed.), 'Islam in the Dialexes', in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, p. 98.

5 *Acts*, Bios 10, p. 410, lines 83-84: "εφίμωσεν τε ο Θεὸς καὶ πᾶν ἔθνος ἐν τοῖς περικύκλῳ αὐτοῦ". *Acts*, Bios 10, p. 410, line 84: "καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ πόλεμος οὐκ ἀνέστη". Obviously, the first version of the *Acts* was written before the Persian conquest of the Himyarite Kingdom (ca 570 AD).

Byzantines for the dominance of the Silk Route, was abruptly disrupted ca the year 525 AD by the Ethiopian invasion and subjugation of South Arabia.[6]

Numerous pertinent studies have been written about the relevant historical events based mainly on the archaeological and epigraphic evidence, supplemented by few scattered passages in the Byzantine historical sources.[7]

While the Byzantine historical sources have been exhaustively used, little attention has been paid to the Byzantine hagiographical works. Nevertheless, of all the other sources that deal with the Himyarite socio-political conditions, scarcely any retain a great wealth of details; especially two of them, the *Martyrdom of Saint Arethas and his Companions* (MA) and the *Acts of St. Gregentius (Acts)*, the latter composed of three parts, "Bios" (Life), "Nomoi" (Laws) and "Dialexis" (Dialogue), offer invaluable information in spite of their shortcomings caused by their edifying aim. (See Appendix A for a short discussion of their authenticity.)

Continuing the most recent works by B. Hendrickx D. Letsios, G. Fiaccadori, E. Patlagean, Ch. Papastathis and Ch. Messis, the present author will attempt to demonstrate the above-mentioned validity of the *Acts of St. Gregentius*, which somewhat completes, with important details, the undisputable relevant evidence of archaeology and epigraphy as recorded in the copious works of Christian Robin and other scholars.

The present work focuses mainly on the historical information provided by the *Martyrdom of St. Arethas and his Companions*, supplemented partly by the *Acts of St. Gregentius* and the Syriac source, the *Book of the Himyarites* –which, according to the present author, developed independently– completing the evidence of epigraphy and archaeology. Based on the above two sources, the article will be

6 For this unique situation that prevailed in the Red Sea, see V. Christides, 'Roman and Byzantine Naval Power in Decline in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 95 (2013), pp. 80-106; id., 'What Went Wrong in the Late Roman Long-Distance Naval Power', in *Graeco-latina et orientalia in honorem Angeli Urbani Sexagenarii*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, (Syro-Arabica, 2), Córdoba: Oriens Academic, 2013, pp. 63-85. Several useful articles concerning navigation in the Red Sea in the early period (1st c. -3rd c AD) appeared in the 11th supplement of *Topoi* (2012) ; for the 6th century see J. Schiettecatte, 'L'Arabie du Sud et la mer du III^e^ siècle av. au VI^e^ siècle apr. J.-C.', *Topoi* 11 (2012), pp. 237-273.

7 I. Shahid, 'The Martyrs of Najrân: Further Reflections', *Le Muséon* 103 (1990), pp. 151-153. Fundamental is the book edited by Joëlle Beaucamp, F. Briquel-Chatonnet and Christian Julien Robin, *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles: régards croisés sur les sources*, (Monographies. Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 32), Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2010 (reviewed by Christides in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 104 :2 (2011), pp. 737-748). It includes a table of the dating of the relevant historical events (p. 79) and a comprehensive bibliography (p. 216-218). Robin in his article 'Nagrān vers l'époque du massacre: Notes sur l'histoire politique, économique et institutionnelle et sur l'introduction du christianisme (avec un réexamen du martyre d'Azqīr)', in *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles*, p. 79, dates this Ehiopian expedition to the year 525 AD.

limited to the discussion of the following: the relations between the State and the Church in the Himyarite Kingdom, i.e. the kings vs. the Archbishop, the role of the Ethiopian army in the conquered country and the role of the rural elite in the semi-urbanized Himyarite towns, completed with Appendixes A, B and C. They illuminate the socio-political situation of the Kingdom of the Himyarites on the eve of the Ethiopian invasion in ca 525 AD and shortly after its subjugation to the Ethiopians. Some pertinent information concerning this expedition is discussed in Appendix B.

1. *Relationship between the State and the Church. The Kings vs. the Archbishop, the Army and the Tribal Leaders*

It should be noted here that the recent book by A. Berger, which encompasses the whole text of the *Acts* with an English translation, enormously facilitated the study of the authenticity of the *Acts*.[8] On the other hand, the historical comments, save G. Fiaccadori's chapter,[9] need much to desire. Furthermore, the lack of any intensive effort by Berger to trace the possible realistic historical elements of this work led some scholars to reject *in toto* its value (see Appendix A). Thus, as correctly pointed out by Berger, while an archbishop called Gregentius never existed, [10] no doubt an archbishop of South Arabia of an unknown name must have been selected by the patriarch of Alexandria and appointed or rather imposed by the Ethiopians who could not restore ecclesiastical order in the Himyarite kingdom without the consent of the Byzantine ecclesiastical leadership.[11]

Both the *Martyrdom* and the *Acts* explicitly report that the newly appointed archbishop was selected by the patriarch of Alexandria in contrast to D. Phillipson's view[12] that there is no evidence about the practice of the Ethiopians to accept archbishops selected by the patriarchate of Alexandria at that time. Actually, it was the patriarch of Alexandria who informed the Byzantine authorities about the persecution of the Christians in Najrān and urged an

8 A. Berger, ed., *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar.*

9 G. Fiaccadori, 'Gregentios in the Land of the Homerites', in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, pp. 48-82.

10 *Acts*, Preface, p. vi and *passim.*

11 See my review in *Collectanea Christians Orientalia* 6 (2009), pp. 458-464, where the merits of this book are highly praised without its shortcomings; see also Christides, 'Authenticity and Imagination: the Martyrdom of St. Arethas and the Acts of St. Gregentius. New Light on the Himyarite Kingdom on the eve and after the Ethiopian Dominance in the 6th Century AD', forthcoming.

12 D. Phillipson, *Foundations of an African Civilisation, Aksum & the northern Horn 1000 BC – AD 1300,* Woodbridge, Suffolk – Rochester NY: James Currey, 2012, pp. 86-87.

Ethiopian invasion in the Himyarite Kingdom in order to overthrow the Jewish king Dhu Nuwās and restore Christianity.[13]

It should be noted that the *Acts*[14] confirms the evidence of the inscriptions[15] that Ẓafār remained the capital of the Himyarite Kingdom (βασιλεύουσα Ταφάρ τῶν Ὁμηριτῶν) and the residence of the chief leaders of the country after the Ethiopic conquest. Moreover, the *Acts* reports that Ẓafār also became the seat of the archbishop and a cathedral church in the name of the Holy Trinity was built there,[16] close to the palace of the king.[17]

The reference of the *Acts* that the appointment of the new king was approved and enthusiastically applauded by the [Ethiopian] army seems to be plausible.[18] Of course, there is no need to try to trace such a practice in the Byzantine military tradition, as wrongly suggested by A. Papathanasiou, [19] since not a single Byzantine soldier was included in the above-mentioned Ethiopian expedition.[20] The Byzantines' only military contribution was their decision to send a small number of their allies, the Nubians, who were annihilated before they arrived in South Arabia.[21] It is not improbable that the Ethiopian army followed an Ethiopian tradition as, noted by Y. Kobishchanov, according to which the army leaders represented tribal leaders and therefore their approval was necessary.[22]

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13 *MA*, §27, p. 257, line 6: «στρατοπεδαρχήσας».

14 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 396, line 187.

15 Robin, 'Inventaire des documents épigraphiques provenant du royaume de Ḥimyar aux IVe – VIe siècles', in *L'Arabie à la veille de l'slam*, Paris: De Boccard, 2009, p. 169; J. Schiettecatte, 'L'évolution du peuplement sudarabique du 1er au VIe siècle', in *L'Arabie à la veiile de l'islam*, p. 230.

16 Acts, Bios 9, p. 394, lines 151-152. The *Book of the Himyarites, Fragments of a Hitherto Unknown Syriac Work*, ed. and trans. Axel Moberg, London - Paris - Leipzig: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press - Édouard Champion - O. Harrasowittz, 1924, p. cv, reports that there was a church in the capital Ẓafār of the Himyarite kingdom which was burnt by the Jewish king Dhū Nuwās, but there is no mention of the newly built church.

17 The word palace appears in the plural, «παλατίων» (*Acts*, Bios 9, p. 394, line 152), perhaps because it is reported as building-complexes similar to those palaces built in Ethiopia; see Phillipson, *Foundations*, p. 90

18 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 400, lines 234-238.

19 A. N. Papathanasiou, *Οι «Νόμοι των Ομηριτών»*, Athens and Komotene: Ant. N. Sakkoula, 1994, p. 102.

20 For the causes of the lack of any Byzantine military assistance see Appendix B.

21 J. P. Monferrer-Sala, *Redefining History on Pre-Islamic Accounts. The Arabic Recension of the Martyrs of Najrân*, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010, pp. 72-73; *MA*, §27, p. 259, lines 19-20. See also Christides, 'Adventures in the Sixth Century Red Sea: The Nubians Who Never Came', in *The Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Graeco-African and Afro-Byzantine Studies at the University of Johannesburg* (27 October -1 November 2014), forthcoming.

22 Y. M. Kobishchanov, *Axum*, Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1966, ed. J. W. Michels, trans. Lorraine T. Kapitanoff, University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University, 1979, p. 211.

Both the *Acts* and the *MA* state that after the death of the Jewish king Dhu Nuwās, the conquerors of the Himyarite kingdom imposed a new king. The *MA* simply reports that the king of the Ethiopian conquerors, Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa, designated a new king of the Himyarites,[23] while the *Acts* reports that he supposedly asked the newly appointed archbishop of South Arabia to select anyone he considered appropriate, and the archbishop, inspired by divine inspiration, chose a dedicated Christian.[24] Obviously, more realistic is the account found in the Syriac *Book of the Himyarites,* written by an unknown author, which bluntly states that Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa himself appointed a new king selected among the members of the Himyarite royal family.[25]

The relationship between the king of the Ethiopians, Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa, and the newly appointed by him king of the Himyarites is described by both the *MA* and the *Acts* as exceedingly cordial; the Himyarite people applauded both kings enthusiastically, using the same term βασιλεύς ("king") for both.[26] The *Acts* describes how the new king of the Himyarites was appointed with great pomp: "[The Ethiopian king Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa] immediately, without neglecting anything, brought a royal robe and dressed him and after a prayer by the archbishop, he placed a crown on his head [and put royal shoes on his feet]."[27] While details of the royal insignia of the new king are not reported in the *Acts*, we assume that they were similar to those of the Ethiopian kings.[28] According to the Byzantine author Malalas, the Ethiopian king Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa wore dazzling regalia, among them a gold threaded linen turban,[29] but as E. Zacharopoulou clarifies, in the Ethiopian coins the Ethiopian king appears either wearing a head cloth or a stemma.[30] Phillipson presented a depiction of an Ethiopian king in a 5th century coin with his regalia, with the stemma prominently displayed[31] (fig. 1).

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23 *MA*, §38, p. 281, lines 6-7.

24 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 400, lines 239-240.

25 *Book of the Himyarites*, p. cxb.

26 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 400, lines 234-235,: «Ἐλεσβοάμ καὶ Ἀβραὰμ...βασιλέων πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη».

27 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 398, 400, lines 224-226: « Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς μηδὲν μελήσας παραχρῆμα ἐνέγκας στολὴν βασιλικὴν ἐνέδυσεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπευξαμένου τοῦ ἀρχιεπισκόπου διάδημα βασιλείας ἐπέθηκεν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ.» Berger's translation of the word «παραχρῆμα» as «on the spot» is not the best; instead the word "immediately" is more meaningful. Likewise, the expression «μηδὲν μελήσας» translated as «without hesitation» is wrong; instead, "without neglecting anything"; in addition the reference to shoes «ὑποδήμασι», p. 400, should have been placed in the text.

28 See Efi Zacharopoulou's comprehensive description in *Πρώιμη Βυζαντινή Αυτοκρατορία και Βασίλειο του Αξούμ* (Early Byzantine Empire and Kingdom of Axum), Thessaloniki: Stamoulis, Ant., 2010, pp. 132-133; see also Phillipson, *Foundations*, pp. 85-87.

29 Malalas, ed. I. Thurn, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia* (CFHB 35), Berlin –New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000, §56, pp. 384-385.

30 Zacharopoulou, *Early Byzantine Empire and Kingdom of Axum*, p. 153.

31 Phillipson, *Foundations*, fig. 25.

In reality the Himyarite kingdom falls into a position of submission. According to the *Book of the Himyarites*, it becomes a tributary state supervised by a number of Ethiopian notables who remained in the conquered country.[32] More explicitly the *MA* and *Acts* report that a great number of Ethiopian soldiers remained there.[33] Paradoxically, both hagiographical sources report that the new king of the Himyarites was Abraha, omitting the rule of Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘, whose reign is mentioned in the inscriptions.[34] Most probably the authors of both hagiographical works, in their effort to embellish the ideal situation which prevailed in the new Himyarite Kingdom, avoided mentioning the dispute between the appointed king by the Ethiopians, Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘, and a rebel called Abraha who dethroned Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa and replaced him.

It is noteworthy that both the *MA* and the *Acts,* which are not directly interrelated, not only avoid mentioning Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘, the above-mentioned immediate legitimate successor of Dhu Nuwās, but also report Abraha as the first king of the Himyarites after the Ethiopian conquest, whom they praise warmly.[35] In addition to the Himyarite inscriptions, the 6th century Byzantine author Procopius and the later Arabic sources, mainly Ṭabarī,[36] inform us that actually a rebel of uncertain descent, called Abraha, revolted against Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘, defeated him twice and finally became himself the king in ca 534-574.[37]

It is unfortunate that neither the *MA* nor the *Acts* reports the conflict between Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘ and Abraha, which could illuminate the actual causes of this conflict, attributed by some modern scholars, based on the contradictory sources, to an effort by the Himyarites to get rid of their subordinate state of taxation.[38] In

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32 *Book of the Himyarites*, p. xclii.

33 *MA*, §20, p. 283, mentions 10,000 soldiers and the *Acts*, Bios 9, pp. 243-244, p. 400, mentions 15,000.

34 Robin, 'Inventaire', p. 204: Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘ (S^1 myf‘ ’s^2 w‘).

35 *MA*, §38, 19-20, pp. 282-83: «ἄνδρα συνετόν, θεόφοβον, χριστιανικώτατον» (wise, θεόφοβος, and very Christian); *Acts*, Bios, p. 400, line 232: «φιλόχριστον» (Christ loving).

36 Procopius, *Persian Wars,* I. xx. 4; trans. H. B. Dewing, *Procopius 1. History of the Wars, Books I-II* (Loeb Classical Library, 48), Cambridge, MA, 1914, text p. 190, trans. p. 191. C. E. Bosworth (trans. and annot.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*, volume V, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 212-214, and note 534, with detailed references to the other Arab authors and the various discussions of relevant modern authors. See also the relevant references with short comments of the other Byzantine authors in B. Hendrickx, *Official Documents in Greek Illustrating the Ancient History of Nubia and Ethiopia (3rd century BC - 6th century AD),* (Monumenta Afro-Hellenica, 1), Johannesburg: Institute for Afro-Hellenic Studies, 1984, pp. 69-73.

37 For new information on the reign of Abraha, especially his activities in the Arabian peninsula, see Robin, 'The Peoples beyond the Arabian Frontier in Late Antiquity: Recent Epigraphic Discoveries and Latest Advances', in *Inside and Out. Interactions between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity, ed.* Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Greg Fisher, Leuven - Paris - Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014, pp. 65-71.

38 For a discussion of Abraha's descent and activities, see Christides, note 3 above.

both the *MA* and the *Acts*, as well as in some later Christian chronographers, their strong edifying spirit caused their concealing of any unpleasant details which could blemish Christianity.

After the restoration of Christianity in the Himyarite kingdom, the building of many churches is briefly mentioned in the *MA* and the *Acts* is the only source in which there are extensive references to the towns where churches were built, from Qāni', the famous southernmost port of South Arabia on the Indian Ocean coastline, to the caravan city of Najrān and beyond.[39] After thorough research, most of them were correctly identified by G. Fiaccadori.[40] Unfortunately, neither Fiaccadori nor the editor of the *Acts* made any effort to explore or at least pose the question among whom the Himyarite priesthood was selected and what the language of the liturgy was in the newly built churches.[41] The *Book of the Himyarites* reports that the Ethiopian king Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa, in the churches he had built, "appointed priests from those who were with him".[42] Most probably they were priests already ordained in Ethiopia who were placed in the Himyarite churches. In the *Acts* it is also stated that the archbishop (whether he was called Gregentius or any other name, it is irrelevant) chose the most learned among the priesthood brought by Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa to the Himyarite kingdom and "appointed them as bishops in every Christianized town".[43]

Most of the priests brought by Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa must have been Ethiopians, knowing only their own language, since in the *Book of the Himyarites* it is stated that the Ethiopian conquerors could not communicate with the Himyarites in any language.[44] In addition, since there was not any translation of the Bible in the Himyarite language, most probably its translation in the Ethiopic language Geez was used in the Himyarite churches. We can assume that while the liturgical language and the reading of the Bible in the Himyarite churches were done in the Ethiopic Geez language, the Himyarite language was also used for the congregation's humbler members. Such bilingual liturgies had been already performed in Syria.[45]

It is rather improbable that the Greek language was used in any of the newly established churches of the Himyarite kingdom. True, five Greek graffiti were

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39 *MA*, §38, 6-10, pp. 282-283. *Acts*, *Bios*, p. 394, lines 150-160.

40 G. Fiaccadori, 'Gregentios in the Land of the Homerites', in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, pp. 54-58.

41 The question of the language of the liturgy was raised in my preliminary study, parts of which have been revised: 'The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 AD)', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 9 (1972), p. 130-133.

42 *Book of the Himyarites*, §XLIVIII, p. cxlii.

43 *Acts*, Bios 9, lines 281-283, p. 404.

44 *Book of the Himyarites*, p. cxxxviii.

45 Christides, 'The Himyarite-Ethiopian War', p. 133.

discovered in South Arabia, three in Qāni' and two in Najrān,[46] in which new churches were built as reported in the *Acts*. Nevertheless, as suggested by Robin, these graffiti were most probably not written by local Greek speaking Himyarites, but by Byzantine visitors, most likely traders.[47] It should be noted that the Byzantines, who are mentioned in the *MA* as victims of the Jewish Himyarite King Dhū Nuwās, are described as passengers found in Najrān.[48]

2. *Rural Elites in the Himyarite Semi-urbanized Towns and their Role in the State*

A very important piece of information drawn from the two above-mentioned hagiographical works concerns the rural elites settled in towns which dominated the Himyarite kingdom at the dawn of their urbanization. Iwona Gajda has extensively discussed the role of the tribe leaders versus the royal power in the Himyarite state. The author based her study mainly on the inscriptions and the Arabic tradition and although she occasionally reports the information of the *MA* and rarely of the *Acts*, she underestimates their importance, neglecting their detailed accounts which do not appear so extensively in any other sources.[49]

A great number of references to the wealthy rural elite of the Himyarite towns are scattered through the narrations of both the *MA* and the *Acts*. In order to express the position of all relevant leaders, the authors of the Greek version of both narrations use the Byzantine terminology, often rooted in earlier times, which vaguely echoes actual similarities. Of course, there is not any actual relationship between the Byzantine terms used by the unknown authors of both narrations.[50]It is a mistake to try to trace the titles of the Himyarite leadership to Byzantine models. It is only in the title ἐθνάρχης, which literarily means "leader of a nation", that we can discern the highest title of a provincial leader.

List of Terminology of titles in *MA* and the *Acts*[51] (Because of the controversial nature of the two parts of the *Acts* of Gregentius, i.e. the *Nomoi* and the *Dialexis*, the list mainly includes titles from the *Bios* and very few references to the narrative parts of the *Nomoi* and the *Dialexis*).

46 Robin, 'Inventaire', p. 169.
47 Robin, 'Inventaire'.
48 *MA*, §27, line 11, p. 259: «μετὰ τῶν εὑρεθέντων ἐκεῖ χριστιανῶν».
49 I. Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar à l'époque monothéiste*, Paris: Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 2009, p. 115, where there is only a passim reference to the description of the construction of churches by Ĕlla Asbĕḥa and the appointment of the clergy in the *Acts*.
50 See for example Papathanasiou, *Οι «Νόμοι των Ομηριτών», passim*.
51 For the interrelationship of the *MA* and the *Acts*, see Appendix A.

List of Terminology of titles in *MA* and the *Acts*

Ἐθνάρχης	Σύγκλητος-Συγκλητικὸς	Μεγιστάν	Ἄρχων	Ἀρχηγός
MA: §7.γ, line 10, p. 201 §7.αβδε, line 58, p. 203 §25, line 18, p. 253	*MA*: §7.γ, line 10, p.201 §7. αβδε, line 80, p. 205 §7.γ, line 54, p. 203 §10, line 18, p. 213	*MA*: §4.αβδε, lines 4-5, p. 193 §9, line 24, p. 211 §14, line 11, p. 223 §22, line 10, p. 245 *MA*: §23, line 4, p. 247	*MA*: §10, line 9, p. 213 §22, line 18,p. 245 §38, line 2, p. 281	*MA*: §4.αβδε, line 5, p. 193 §5, line 14, p. 195 §6, line 10, p. 199 §35, line 9, p. 275
Ἐθνάρχης	Σύγκλητος-Συγκλητικός	Μεγιστάν	Ἄρχων	
Acts: Bios 9, line 10, p. 382; 9, line 162, p. 394	*Acts*: Bios 9, line 195, p. 396 *Nomoi*, line 494, p. 446 *Dialexis* A, line 494, p. 492 *Dialexis* E, line 693, p. 798	*Acts*: Bios 3, line 282, p. 260; 6, line 202, p. 342; 9, line 160, p. 394; 9, line 193, p. 396; 9, line 200, p. 398; 10, line 52, p. 408; 10, line 70, p. 410; 10, lines 76-77, p. 410	*Acts, Bios* 9, line 200, p. 398	

The term ἐθνάρχης does not appear in the Byzantine sources as a technical administrative term and is used to denote the leader of a nation.[52] In both the *MA* and the *Acts*, it is used mainly, but not exclusively, as a title attached to the most important protagonist of the Christians of the town of Najrān, Arethas, who stubbornly resisted the attempt of their king Dhu Nuwās to force them to renounce Christianity. Arethas has been identified with Ḥārith bn. Kā'b and his tribal relations and hostilities with the king of the Himyarites, Dhu Nuwās (Yūsuf As'ar Yath'ar), have been extensively discussed by many scholars, especially by Christian Julien Robin and Iwona Gajda.[53] According to Robin, the title ἐθνάρχης

52 For example Procopius, 1, 19, 18.

53 Robin, 'Nagrān vers l'époque du massacre', pp. 57-58; Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, pp. 84-103; see also Aisha S. Abuljadayl' article in the present volume.

corresponds to the Syriac *ryš* and to the Arabic *sayyid*, leaders of the tribe.[54] Gajda attributes a similar role to the Arabic term *qayl*, attached to the most dominant person in a tribe who had great independence within his area.[55] She considers the *qayl*'s function mainly hereditary but also granted by the king. Similarly, in both the *MA* and the *Act*, the ἐθνάρχης Arethas enjoys great power in his tribe and his title was hereditary ratified by the king.[56]

In addition, the *MA* reports that Arethas possessed large land estates, part of which he offered to the Church.[57] Both the *MA* and the *Acts* clearly indicate the participation of the local rural leaders in the administration of the kingdom of the Himyarites under various archaic titles. Thus, Aretha's local leaders, bearing the titles ἀρχηγός and/or ἄρχων, participated in the decision to open the gates to the invading army of king Dhu Nuwās and in other activities during the siege of Najrān.[58] Above all, a conspicuous example of the powerful position of the local leaders is reported in *MA*, in which a certain leader of the senate called Aeithalas, bearing the titles ἀρχηγός and πρῶτος τῆς συγκλήτου,[59] who was a general of Dhu Nuwās' invading army, dared to openly oppose the king's view concerning Nestorianism. The king was unable to punish him because he was a prominent landlord and a famous general.[60] No doubt, the general was a tribal leader and a wealthy rural landlord whose exact function cannot be discerned under the disguise of the title σύγκλητος (senate), a Roman institution modified substantially in Byzantine times.[61]

The Himyarite σύγκλητος was simply a council, an assembly of notables, i.e. tribal leaders who, as mentioned in the *Acts*, participated even in the ratification of a chosen king.[62] King Ĕlla Aṣbĕḥa, after selecting himself the new king of the Himyarite kingdom, ratified his election first with the army and afterwards, under the blessing of the archbishop, with the concession of the assembly of the local leaders[63] called ἄρχοντες, μεγιστᾶνες and σατράπαι (rulers, tycoons, and the

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54 Robin, 'Nagrān vers l'époque du massacre', pp. 57-58.

55 Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, p. 29.

56 *MA*, §38, lines 13-14, p. 283: [the king] «ποιεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἁγίου Ἀρέθα ἐθνάρχην». *Acts*, *Bios* 9, line 162, p. 394: [the king] «ἐθνάρχην καταστήσας Ἀρέθαν τὸν υἱὸν».

57 *MA*, §38, lines 14, 15, p. 283.

58 *MA*, §5, line 14, p. 195; §6, line 9, p. 199; §10, line 9, p. 213.

59 *MA*, §7 αβδε, lines 79-80, p. 203.

60 *MA*, §7 αβδε, lines 79-80, p. 203.

61 For an extensive account of the development of the «σύγκλητος», see the comprehensive discussion in Gilbert Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale (Constantinople et ses institutions de 330-451)*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984. Greek trans. Marina Loukaki, *Η Γέννηση μιας πρωτεύουσας, (Η Κωνσταντινούπολη και οι θεσμοί της από το 330 έως το 451)*, Αθήνα: Μορφωτικό Ἵδρυμα Εθνικής Τράπεζας, 2000, pp. 155-205. See also E. Christou, 'Σύγκλητος, συγκλητικοί κατά τη μέση βυζαντινή περίοδο', *Βυζαντιακά* 14 (1994), pp. 179-216.

62 *Acts*, Bios 9 p. 396, line 195.

63 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 398, lines 200-201.

so-called satraps). All these antiquated terms can simply be understood as "notables of various degrees" without any connection with the actual Byzantine synonyms. In contrast, the titles used in the Byzantine towns corresponded to their actual function.[64]

While the exact political power of the above notables is not known, it is evident in the hagiographical sources that they represent the rural elite of the Himyarite kingdom, i.e. tribal leaders settled in the towns of Najrān and/or Ẓafār. They are holders of large estates adjacent to their town residences,[65] and a number of them possessed monetary wealth as the rich widow who died as a martyr.[66] Her large estates were cultivated and administered by a great number of farmers, part of whom were perhaps slaves.[67] Of great significance is a vague reference in *MA* to the financial prosperity of this rich widow which included "gold and silver and bronze coins".[68] It should be noted that at this time there were not any Himyarite coins and foreign coins were used instead, save for some copper coins of low quality. [69] The widow's rural property next to her town residence demonstrated the semi-urban society which was emerging in Najrān and the political power acquired by the formerly nomadic leaders, along with their rural wealth.

Conclusions

The Martyrdom of St. Arethas and his Companions describes the socio-political state in Najrān at the turn of the 6th century AD (on the eve of the Ethiopian conquest), a prosperous, semi-autonomous area of the Himyarite Kingdom that was composed of a multinational population of mainly Himyarites (Ὁμηρῖται) and Persians (Πέρσαι), Ethiopians (Αἰθίοπες) and Byzantines (Ῥωμαῖοι), who were most likely visiting merchant sailors.[70] As it is reported in the *MA*, the population of Najrān had preserved a tribal political structure, similar to the entire Himyarite Kingdom, which was correctly labeled by Tapper as a tribal state ruled

64 A.H. M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940 (rep. 1984), *passim*.

65 See for example the above-mentioned estates of Arethas.

66 *MA*, §11 αβδε, lines 9-12, p. 219.

67 *MA*, §11 αβδε, lines 12-13, p. 215; It is not clear whether the reference to «παῖδες» and «παιδίσκαις» (*MA*, §11 αβδε, lines 13-14, p. 215, 217) means "slaves" or "free young men and women".

68 *MA*, §αβδε, lines 13-14, p. 215, 217.

69 Robin, 'Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar', *Arabia* 1 (2003), p. 109.

70 *MA*, §2, line 12, p. 187.

by a local elite from the 4th century AD.[71] The *MA* reveals significant information about the emerging semi-urbanized society of Najrān in South Arabia. Through the traditional Byzantine titles ἐθνάρχης, σύγκλητος and other conventional terms used in the *MA* and the *Acts*, we discern the emergence of settled rural elites in the semi-urban towns. The *Acts*, especially the part called Bios, provides – after careful scrutiny- supplementary information particularly about the period following the Ethiopian conquest of the Himyarite Kingdom. This socio-political situation following the Ethiopian invasion in ca 525 transformed Najrān and the whole of the Himyarite Kingdom into a centralized state preserving its tribal structure but under the control of the Ethiopian conquerors.[72]

Of course, many questions, some of them never raised, remain unanswered. The general impression is that Najrān included a vast area around the city and was governed by the rural elites, bearing various made-up Byzantine titles described by the unknown authors of the *MA* and the *Acts.* Most probably the farms around the town were cultivated only by free farmers and the reference in MA to slaves refers to the household slaves.[73]

The semi-autonomous city-state of Najrān had its own independent army which could be also employed against the state army as it is reported in the Syriac sources. It is also clear that there were certain unknown close relations between the central administration of the state and the semi-autonomous Najrān.[74] This is shown in an allusion in the *MA*, in which Dhu Nuwās, the king of the Himyarites, expressed his regret that the *ethnarhis* Arethas did not cooperate closely with him, although he had done with his father. The actual political power of the archbishop in the Himyarite kingdom is unknown and the relevant information in the *Acts* needs special scrutiny before any conclusions can be drawn.

The exact source of the first version of the *MA* created in pre-Islamic times will probably never be known, but there is no doubt that it was based on the work of an author who not only was an eyewitness but was also well aware of the particular type of navigation in the Red Sea in the 6th century AD and had full knowledge of the activities of the Red Sea ports (see Appendix B).

It should be noted that none of the parallel Syriac sources describe in detail the navigational activities of the Ethiopians.

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71 R. Tapper, 'Anthropologists, Historians and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle-East', in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middel-East*, ed. Ph. S. Khoury and J. Kostiner, Berkeley – Los Angeles – Oxford: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 68-69.

72 Jérémie Schiettecatte, 'L'évolution du peuplement sudarabique du 1er au VIe siècle', in *L'Arabie à la veille de l'Islam,* p. 242.

73 See note 68 above.

74 *MA*, §15, lines 4-6, p. 225 : "διατὶ οὐκ ἐμιμήσω τὸν πατέρα σου, τὸν ἄρξαντα τῆς πόλεως ταύτης καὶ πάσης τῆς περιχώρου, ὃς καὶ ἔντιμος ἦν ἐπὶ τῶν πρὸ ἐμοῦ βασιλέων".

Appendix A

A Short Note on the Authenticity of the Martyrdom of St. Arethas and his Companions and the Acts of St. Gregentius

Two Byzantine hagiographical Works, the *Martyrdom of St. Arethas and his Companions* (*MA*) and the *Acts of St. Gregentius (Acts),* are of a unique value, although they have not yet been properly analyzed and used. They yield much needed insight into the military conflict between Christian Ethiopia and the Jewish Himyarite Kingdom at the turn of the 6th century AD and shed light on the socio-political situation in the Himyarite Kingdom on the eve of the military conflict with the Ethiopians and the subsequent occupation of the kingdom by them.[75]

The study of the above hagiographical works was enhanced by the new editions and translations of their texts. The *MA* was carefully edited by Marina Detoraki with an excellent translation by Joëlle Beaucamp, supplemented with a short commentary of its relationship with the Oriental sources by André Bingelli, and with an introduction and scattered references by the editor.[76] Unfortunately, some of the main problems still remain unanswered, i.e. the author of the MA, the readers for whom this source was written and its actual sources.

The *Acts of St. Gregentius* was carefully edited by A. Berger with a correct but rather pedantic translation which does not reflect the style of the hagiographer and remains the same through the whole work without any variation among the three parts of the *Acts*.[77] Berger has argued that an archbishop of the Church of South Arabia with the name Gregentius never existed and that the *Acts* was a compilation of various sources, although he added a short part to his book written by G. Fiaccadori, where it is demonstrated that part of Gregentius' work includes valuable historical information concerning South Arabia's struggle with the Ethiopians. Berger made no effort to relate the part analyzed by Fiaccadori to many supplementary scattered historical elements in the *Acts*, thus negating any value concerning the historical validity of this hagiographical work.

The *Acts of St. Gregentius* is composed of three parts, following the editor's order: the *Bios*, the *Nomoi* and the *Dialexis*. In the present paper an effort has been made to draw information mainly from the *Bios*, in particular the special section

[75] For an extensive analysis of both works, see Christides, 'Authenticity and Imagination: the *Martyrdom of St. Arethas* and the *Acts of St. Gregentius*: New light on the Himyarite Kingdom on the Eve and after the Ethiopian Dominance in the 6th century', forthcoming.

[76] *Le martyre de Sain Aréthas et de ses compagnons*, ed. M. Detoraki.

[77] *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, ed. A. Berger.

which is acknowledged by Fiaccadori as authentic,[78] often corroborated with corresponding passages in the *MA*. It should be noted that a variation in the style of each part of Berger's translation could have facilitated the problem of their interrelationship. Of course a linguistic analysis of the three parts by a specialist could bring undeniable results. Suffice it to mention here that while the *Bios* and the *Nomoi* seem to be composed by the same author, the *Dialexis* is obviously a later product, as it is indicated by specialists in religion, manifested not only in the style but also in the content, but a discussion of its dogma has no place in the present work. Of course, it should be always remembered that the Byzantine hagiographical works cannot be regarded as merely historical narrations but basically instruments of edification and propagandistic imperial ideas.

Appendix B

The Causes of the Inability of the Byzantines to join the Ethiopian Amphibious Expedition in South Arabia (ca 525 AD)

It is noticeable that there is no mention of any military support of the Byzantines in the Ethiopian military amphibian expedition in South Arabia in ca 525 AD. Inevitably the question will arise as for the causes of this absence. In general various views have been expressed regarding this problem. According to David W. Phillipson, the Byzantines avoided any direct military involvement in the Ethiopian invasion because of their dogmatic differences with the Ethiopians who were Monophysites.[79] This view cannot be sustained because the Byzantine emperor Justin I (518-527), whose policy was dictated by Justinian,[80] applied a different tolerable attitude towards the heretic allies who resided beyond the Byzantine Empire. Actually, the Byzantines could not mobilize any infantry sources since there were none close to South Arabia. Their military infantry forces in southern Egypt, continuing the imperial policy of the Romans, were

[78] G. Fiaccadori, 'Gregentios in the Land of the Homerites', in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, pp. 48-82.

[79] Phillipson, *Foundations*, p. 205.

[80] Phillipson's view that Justin's policy was different from his successor Justinian cannot be sustained; see Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950, p. 6: "The reign of Justin I is to be regarded as the unofficial reign of Justinian". Unfortunately, Justinian's policy in the Red Sea is not discussed by M. Maas, 'Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. M. Maas, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 3-27.

stationed around the scattered fortresses protecting their southern border against the never ending nomads' threats.[81]

The reference in the *MA* that there was a daring attempt by the Byzantines to assist the Ethiopians by sending a small force of nomadic Nubian allies[82], who were famous archers,[83] seems to be reasonably valid, but they never reached their destination and were devastated on their way to South Arabia.[84]

The lack of any naval support of the Byzantines in the Ethiopian expedition is not surprising since by the 6th century AD, Ethiopia had reached the peak of its power, enriched with its intensive land trade relations with Nubia and multiplied its construction of merchant ships in the shipyards of Adulis. On the other hand by the 6th century the Byzantines' naval activities in the Red Sea and beyond had declined, which had already started from the 3rd century AD.[85] The best source that explicitly reports on the preparation of the Ethiopian expedition and its development stage by stage is the *MA*. The detailed facets of the above activities appear realistically only in the *MA* and leave little doubt that they are based on an account of an eyewitness.

Preparation of the Ethiopian expedition (ca 525 AD)

The preparation of the expedition which appears in the *MA* far exceeds its importance as an introduction to a simple description of a naval expedition. Above all, it demonstrates an abrupt change in the spirit of free navigation which existed in the Red Sea and beyond at the end of the 5th century. At this period, peaceful free international navigation prevailed. Byzantine and Persian ships crossed each other and anchored side by side in the Ethiopian, South Arabian and Sri Lanka ports. According to the early 6th century Byzantine author, Cosmas Indicopleustes, it is at this time that Persians and Byzantines- the two eternal enemies- could anchor their ships side by side in the port of Tabrobani (Sri Lanka, Ceylon) and their passengers would meet each other in the royal court of

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81 F. de Romanis, 'Between the Nile and the Red Sea. Imperial trade and Barbarians', in *Arid Lands in Roman Times*, Papers from the International Conference (Rome July 9th-10th 2001), ed. Mario Liverani (Arid Zone Archaeology Monographs, 4), Rome: Edizioni All-Insegna del Giglio, 2003, pp. 121-122.

82 *MA*, §29, line 4, p. 263.

83 Gamal Mohd. A. Al-Tahir, 'The Nubian Archers in Pre-Islamic and Islamic Periods', *Graeco-Arabica* 5 (1993), pp. 139-152.

84 Christides, 'Adventures in the Sixth Century Red Sea: The Nubians who never came', forthcoming.

85 Christides, 'Roman and Byzantine Naval Power in Decline in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 95 (2013), pp. 80-106.

the local rulers without any problem.[86] It is only on the remote island of Sokotra, located in the Indian Ocean, northeast of the Cape Guardafawi, that restrictions were imposed on foreign sailors by the kingdom of Ḥadramawt which dominated Sokotra's trade from the port of Qāni', especially in the first century. But most probably such restrictions must have been lifted by the early 6th century.[87]

It is at this time, which we can call the "golden age" of the international sailing and trade in the Red Sea, that Byzantine, Persian and Indian travelers-merchants embark each other's merchant ships without any obstacle. The missionary Frumentius sailed in a Byzantine ship to Ethiopia, from where he traveled to Sri Lanka in an Ethiopian ship.[88] As the 6th century Byzantine author Cosmas Indicopleustes reports, Sopatrus, a Byzantine merchant-sailor, traveled to Sri Lanka in an Ethiopian ship, along with a group of Ethiopians.[89] It is not therefore surprising that a number of merchant ships, belonging to various ports, anchored at the Ethiopian port of Adulis, and were used as transport ships for the invading Ethiopian army at the time of the Ethiopian expedition of ca 525 AD.

The author of the *MA* reports that all these ships belonged to Byzantine, Ethiopian and Persian merchants.[90] Obviously, they were all confiscated by the Ethiopians. Unfortunately, as it has been already stated, a number of scholars report, misunderstanding *MA*'s relevant references, that all these merchant ships were Byzantine warships which transported the Ethiopian army.[91] Astonishingly, even in the otherwise well written recent book by Chiara Zazzaro, *The Ancient Red Sea Port of Adulis and the Eritrean Coastal Region*, we read: "The Abyssinians collected their own fleet and ships from their allies in the shipyard...".[92] To repeat once more, the *MA* reports "[confiscation] of the Byzantine, Indian and Persian merchant ships",[93] not collection of non-existent allies' warships.[94] In fact, in the Red Sea, a notorious turbulent sea, exposed to underwater and surface currents,

86 Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. Wanda Wolka-Conus, vol. III, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1973, book XI, §17-19, pp. 348-351.

87 *Foreign Sailors on Socotra: the Inscriptions and Drawings from the Cave Hoq*, ed. Ingo Strauch, Bremen: Hempen Verlag, 2012, p. 254.

88 G. Haile, 'The Homily in Honour of St. Frumetnius Bishop of Axum', *Analecta Bollandiana* 97 (1979), pp. 316-317.

89 Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne,* vol. III, book XI, §17-19, pp. 348-351.

90 *MA*, §29, line 4, p. 263 : «Ρωμαίων καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Ἰνδῶν».

91 Paolo La Spisa, 'Contamination, Conflation and 'Fluid' Tradition in the Martyrion of Arethas and his Companions in Nağrān', *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 7 (January 2014), pp. 24-28.

92 Chiara Zazzaro, *The Ancient Red Sea Port of Adulis and the Eritrean Coastal Region*, (Bar International Series, 2569), Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013, p. 7.

93 *MA*, §29, p. 263.

94 Paradoxically, we also read in R. Tomber's book, *Indo-Roman Trade from Pots to Pepper,* London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2008, p. 170: "Indeed, the *Martyrium* describes the warships as being manned by Roman, Ethiopian and Persian merchants".

violent adverse winds, constant thick fogs and unexpected shallow waters, not a single warship existed until the Fatimid period in the 11th century.[95]

The Ethiopian expedition presents the most conspicuous evidence of the turning point of the free international navigation in the Red Sea and beyond. Following the preparation of this expedition, the international free navigation collapsed and it was replaced with the predominance of the Ethiopians which lasted until the Persian occupation in ca. 570 AD. The valuable passage in the *MA* reporting the preparation of the Ethiopian expedition is also useful for another reason, i.e. the enumeration of the confiscated ships which belonged to each port. Based on this information, we can roughly assume each port's naval strength; thus, we learn that Clysma possessed 20 merchant ships, by far more than Berenike which possessed only two ships, while no merchant ships belonged to the port of Myos Hormos, which was passing a period of decadence as it is also attested in the archaeological findings.[96] Surprisingly, we also learn from this passage that seven ships belonged to the islands of Farasan, in the extreme south of the Red Sea. These little known islands greatly developed in medieval times and became a stopover towards the silk route. They possessed well protected ports from every wind and had abundant ground water from wells.[97]

Of great importance is that in the same passage it is reported that ten more ships were constructed in the port of Adulis, built according to the "Indian way", i.e. sewn-plank boats, the typical way of local construction. It should be noted that while in a number of recent articles it is emphatically mentioned that the new underwater archaeological finds reveal that the ships built in the Byzantine ports of the Red Sea were constructed according to the Mediterranean method, few references are made to the local construction of sewn boats which was better suited for navigation in the Red Sea at this period.[98]

In general, in spite of a recent outburst of important publications concerning shipbuilding in the Red Sea,[99] certain questions have not been raised i.e.: what

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95 Christides, 'Roman and Byzantine Naval Power', p. 85 and n. 23.

96 Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade from Pots to Pepper*, p. 65; S. E. Sidebotham and W. Z. Wendrich (eds), *Berenike 1996: Report of the Excavations at Berenike (Egyptian Red Sea Coast) and the Survey of the Eastern Desert*, Leiden: CNWS, 1998, pp. 453-454.

97 William Facey, 'Sailing the Red Sea', in *The Principles of Arab Navigation*, ed. Anthony R. Constable and William Facey, London: Arabian Publishing, 2013, p. 108.

98 Christides, 'Roman and Byzantine Naval Power', p. 99.

99 Lucy Blue, Julian Whitewright and Ross Thomas, 'Ships and Ships' Fittings', in *Myos Hormos – Quseir al-Qadim. Roman and Islamic Ports on the Red Sea. Volume 2: Finds from the excavations of 1999-2003*, ed. David Peacock and Lucy Blue, (University of Southampton Series in Archaeology No. 6, Bar International Series, 2286), Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011, pp. 179-205. Of particular importance is the picture "of the only certain portrayal of a boat in pre-Islamic Arabia", found in Sumhuram of Hadramawt; see Alessandra Avanzini, 'Sumhuram: a Hadrami Port on the Indian Ocean', in *The Indian Ocean in the Ancient Period*, ed. Eivind Heldaas Seland, (BAR International Series, 1593), Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007, p. 28, fig. 4.

changes were made to the Mediterranean type ships in order to enable them to sail safely on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean,[100] and what type of ships were used by Romans and Byzantines for carrying exotic African animals in the Red Sea and beyond?[101] In Agatharchides' 2nd century BC work, *On the Erythraean Sea*, we find a vague description of special ships for carrying elephants in the Red Sea.[102] Arab iconography, which is very useful for depicting transportation of passengers in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean[103] (fig. 2), fails to properly describe the position where the animals were placed[104] (fig. 3), but reveals the existence of special protective compartments for the passengers of the locally constructed ships. Such protective cabinets also appear in the modern Arab dhows which are constructed according to the traditional way with some proper modifications (fig. 4). Equally conventional are the depictions of sea transportation of animals in the Roman and Byzantine iconography; a rare depiction of transportation of elephants appears in the famous mosaic of Piazza Armerina in which an elephant is shown walking on a special gangway entering a conventionally depicted transportation ship (fig. 5).[105]

Description of the Ethiopians' perilous trip on the Red Sea, Successful Stratagem for Landing in South Arabia. Ethiopian Victory

The *MA* is the only source which describes with amazing details all the stages of the dangerous trip of the Ethiopian army and their landing, betraying an eyewitness' evidence. The *MA* vividly describes the sufferings of the Ethiopian army which had embarked on the overcrowded merchant vessels during their

[100] For some possible alterations, see Christides, 'Roman and Byzantine Naval Power', p. 97.

[101] In *Digesta*, XXXIX, 4, 16, there is a list of wild animals imported from Sudan: "leones...pantherae, etc.".

[102] *Agatharchides of Cnidus, On the Erythraean Sea*, trans. and ed. by Stanley M. Burstein, London: The Hakluyt Society, 1989, p. 141. See also Christides, 'Transportation of Elephants in Hellenistic and Byzantine Egypt', in *Handelsg*üter und Verkehrswege, Aspekte der Warenversorgung im östlichen Mittelmeerraum (4. bis 15. Jahrhundert), ed. Ewald Kislinger, Johannes Koder and Andreas Külzer, Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010, pp. 71-77.

[103] Dionisius A. Agius, 'Ships that Sailed the Red Sea in Medieval and Early Modern Islam. Perception and Reception', in *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, ed. Venetia Porter and Liana Saif, London: The British Museum Research Publication, 2013, pp. 92-94.

[104] Michel Mollat and Jehan Desanges, *Les routes millénaires*, Paris: Éditions Nathan, 1988, p. 74; R. J. A. Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, Austin, TX, 1983, pp. 24ff; Christides, 'Raid and Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Treatise by Muḥammad bn. 'Umar, the Faqīh from Occupied Moslem Crete, and the Rhodian Sea Law, Two Parallel texts', *Graeco-Arabica* 5 (1993), pp. 70-73.

[105] Michel Mollat and Jehan Desanges, *Les routes millénaires*, Paris: Éditions Nathan, 1988, p. 74; R. J. A. Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, Austin, TX, 1983, pp. 24ff; Christides, 'Raid and Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Treatise by Muḥammad bn. 'Umar, the Faqīh from Occupied Moslem Crete, and the Rhodian Sea Law, Two Parallel texts', *Graeco-Arabica* 5 (1993), pp. 70-73.

perilous trip; under the scorching sun a large number of soldiers died from thirst and were thrown into the water.[106]

The *MA* describes in length the confrontation of the Ethiopian naval power with the Himyarites. The Ethiopian fleet was divided into three squadrons when they were approaching the land. The Himyarites had organized their defense carefully. Huge tents were protecting their army from the blazing sun supported by a large number of camels which moved constantly creating a frightening spectacle. The Ethiopians were terrified but they managed to reach the shore and disembark using a stratagem, i.e. they disembarked and proceeded cautiously protected by their small attached lifeboats.[107] The ensuing land battle and victory of the Ethiopian army is described in various ways in the Arabic sources corroborating the information of the *Acts*.

Appendix C

Judaism in the Himyarite Kingdom after its Conquest by the Ethiopians (ca 525 AD) according to the Acts

The Kingdom of the Himyarites, after its conquest by the Ethiopians in ca 525 AD, is described in the *Acts* as an ideal earthy paradise where absolute justice was imposed. Nevertheless, one gets the impression that the people heavily suffered because, as it is described in the *Acts*, an austere tyrannical legislation known as the *Nomoi* (Laws) was imposed on the everyday life of the inhabitants. As a result fear (φόβος) and trembling (τρόμος) spread all over.[108] Thus, the information of the *Acts* coincides with that of some of the Arabic sources which report in general great dissatisfaction in the Himyarite Kingdom because of the heavy taxation imposed on them by the Ethiopians and the criminal behavior of their local collaborators.[109]

From all the inhabitants of the Himyarite kingdom, the worst fell upon the Jewish Himyarites who were ruthlessly persecuted. The *Acts* reports that the Jewish Himyarites were especially mistreated and suffered pitiless persecution. Judaism, which preceded Christianity in the Kingdom of the Himyarites, had become the official religion of the Himyarite kingdom at the time of King Dhu Nuwās. Unfortunately, we do not possess adequate evidence of the type of Judaism practiced by the Himyarite Jews. Both Robin and Gajda report that

[106] *MA*, §34, lines 6-8, p. 273

[107] For a detailed discussion of this disembarkation, see Christides, 'The Martyrdom of Arethas and the Days after: History vs. Hagiography', *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 (2000), pp. 51-91.

[108] *Acts*, Nomoi, p. 412, l. 12.

[109] Ṭabari, p. 237 and n. 583: "oppression and humiliation of the people of Yemen".

Himyarite Judaism was of a peculiar nature and they doubt whether the Himyarite Jews followed the traditional way of Judaism which is not simply an assemblage of religious beliefs bur a modus vivendi which includes fasting, special dietary rules, change of names, respect of Sabbath, circumcision etc.[110] Concerning the attitude of the Himyarite Jews towards their Ethiopian invaders, there is no doubt that they were strongly attached to their country and had denounced the Ethiopian invasion, although it is not clearly attested whether their hostility was motivated by any strong ethnic attachment. In a number of popular later Arabic stories and in an Arabic epic novel, *Sīrat Fāris al-Yaman al-Malik* by Sayf bn. Dhī Yazan, a heroic resistance of South Arabia against the Ethiopian conquerors is described.[111]

The *Acts* of Saint Gregentius, coinciding with the above-mentioned Arabic sources, contributes some important information which, if accepted as authentic, can illuminate somewhat the dark period between the Ethiopian conquest (ca 525) until ca 570 when Yemen was conquered by the Persians. Thus, the *Acts* reports the following: (a) the Himyarite Jews were first asked to renounce their religion by persuasion;[112] if not persuaded, they were forced to accept baptism otherwise they would face the death penalty.[113] (b) They were forced to abandon their special neighborhoods where they lived together, and to associate with other people.[114] (c) The unmarried Himyarite Jews were prohibited to marry with others of the same religion, otherwise they were condemned to death.[115] (d) A large number of them decided to pretend having converted to Christianity, waiting for the time they could convert to Judaism again.[116] This explains the survival of Judaism in Yemen for many centuries until the present day in contrast to Christianity which had disappeared in Yemen by the early Islamic period.[117] To repeat, if the authenticity of the *Acts* was not so much disputed, we could remark that this is the most significant information we possess about the Himyarite Judaism during the Ethiopian dominance.

In addition to the dissatisfaction of the subjugated Himyarites due to the Ethiopian mandate, the local tribal rivalries should be taken into account; they

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110 Robin, 'Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar', p. 151 , calls it "un judaïsme plus ḥimyarite que juif"; Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar à l'époque monothéiste*, p. 239, states "judaïsant mais pas exactement juif".

111 Harry T. Norris, 'Sayf b. Ḏī Yazan and the Book of the History of the Nile', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 7 (1989), p. 65.

112 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 404, lines 285-286.

113 *Acts*, Bios 9, p. 404, lines 285-286.

114 *Acts*, Dialexis E, p. 798, lines 699-701: «Διεσκόρπισε τὰς πατριὰς αὐτῶν ἀπ'ἀλλήλων καὶ προστέταχε ἀναμιγνῆναι αὐτοὺς ταῖς κατοικίαις τῶν χριστιανῶν».

115 *Acts*, Dialexis E, p. 798, lines 702-704.

116 *Acts*, Bios 10, p. 404, lines 5-7.

117 Michael Lecker, 'Najrān Inc.: The Najrānī exiles in Iraq, Syria and Baḥrayn from 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭab to Hārūn al-Rashīd', in *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe sièckes*, pp. 293-302.

ended with the dethronement of the king Masrūq b. Abraha and his replacement by Sayf b. Dhī Yazan. Of course the expulsion of the Ethiopians and their replacement by the Persians did not improve the situation in South Arabia. Once more the Himyarites were forced to pay tribute to the new masters. A new chapter opened for South Arabia which lies beyond the present scope.



Fig. 1. Ethiopian fifth-century coin inscribed depicting an Aksumite king with his regalia. D. Phillipson, *Foundations of an African Civilisation, Aksum & the northern Horn 1000 BC-AD 1300*, Woodbridge, Suffolk - Rochester NY, 2012, fig. 25, p. 86.

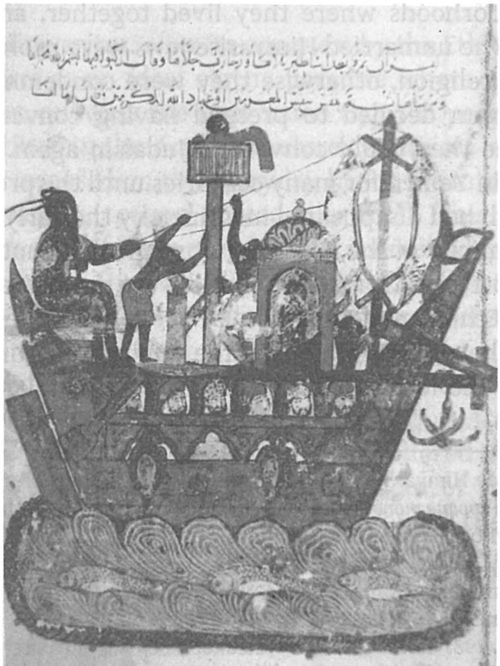


Fig. 2. Arab merchant ship of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.The Ḥarīrī Ar. MS 5847. 1237 AD. National Library of Paris. Courtesy of IGOAS.

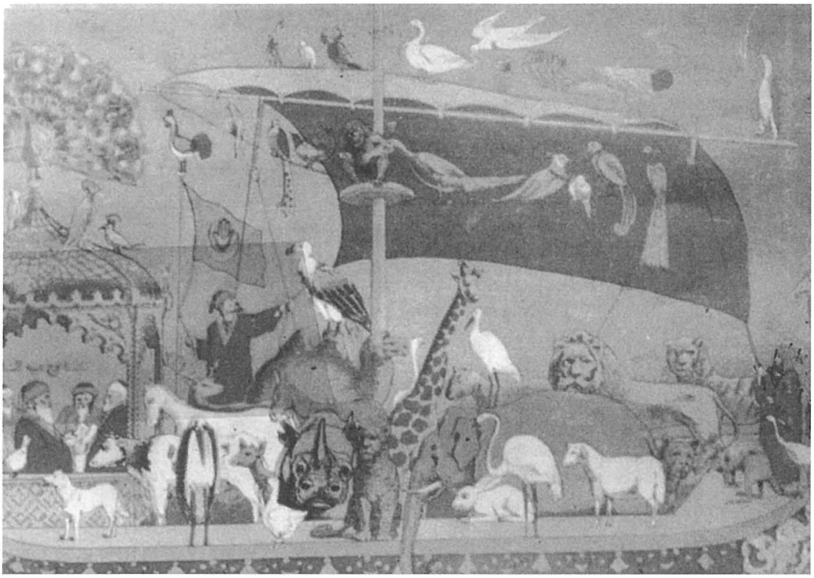


Fig. 3. Animal transport Arab ship of the Mediterranean, depicted on glassware of Tunis. Dār Ben ʿAbdallah Museum of Tunis. From *L'homme méditerranéen et la mer*. Actes du Troisième Congrès International d'études des cultures de la Méditerranée Occidentale, Jerba, April 1981, Tunis, 1985, cover page.



Fig. 4. Modern Arab dhow reconstructed in Kuwait (Photo courtesy by Dr. Y. Y. al-Hijji).

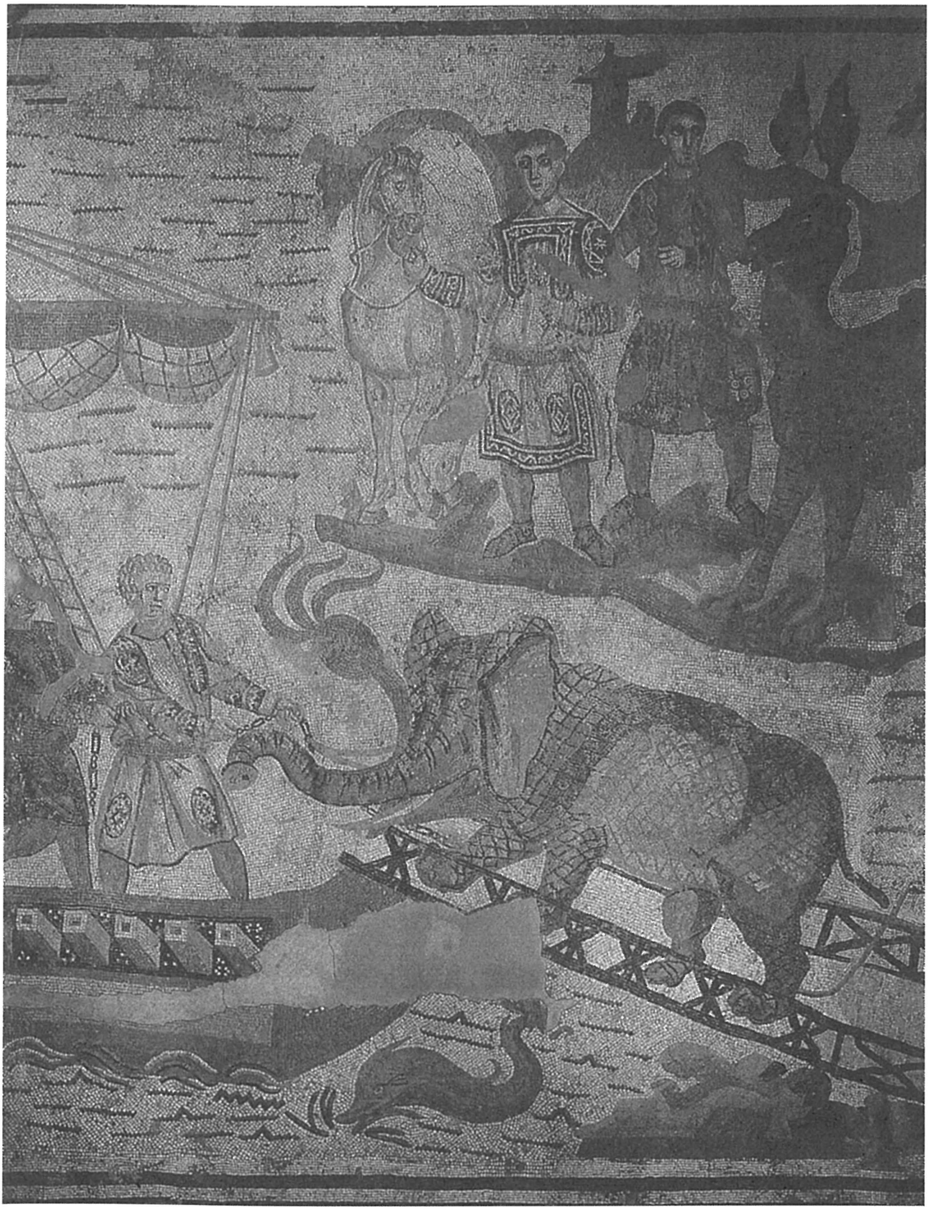


Fig. 5. The embarkation of an elephant. Mosaic found in Piazza Armerina (Sicily, beginning of the 4th c. AD).

Trajan's Canal and the Logistics of Late Antiquity India Trade

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Peoples living around the Mediterranean Sea in the time before Islam were drawn by a sort of centripetal force, which meant that they tended to focus more on the internal maritime horizon of their sea than on horizons beyond it. Yet the ancient Mediterranean was no *hortus conclusus*; it had at least three gateways to the outer world. The first, largely underexploited in antiquity, linked the Mediterranean to the Atlantic world; the second, vital for the Greek world of the archaic and classical ages, connected with the Black Sea regions; and the third led to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Unlike the two first gateways, the third did not possess a natural waterway joining the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. It comes as no surprise therefore that throughout antiquity, from the 7th century BCE to the 7th century CE, whenever the Nile valley was perceived as an integral part of a Mediterranean world, the problem emerged of how to connect the two shores of Egypt.

Different logistical solutions have been adopted at different times, or practiced at the same time, in a continuous effort to adapt to shifting requirements and conditions. Each solution had to grapple with three major environmental challenges—the sea, desert, and river—in order to link the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. The first challenge was navigating the Red Sea north of 20° north latitude line. Apart from treacherous coral reefs and unfriendly desertic shores, the northern part of the Red Sea was beset all year by winds that blew constantly from the north. As a consequence, the further north one had to sail, the more time-consuming, difficult and dangerous the navigation was.[1] The second challenge was transferring the cargoes between the Red Sea and the Nile River. For this, the further south one docked, the more laborious and expensive the crossing was. The third challenge was sailing up the Nile. During the summer the etesian winds helped, but only up to a certain point, since they weaken considerably south of Asyut.[2] It is not by chance that the ancient and

1 F. De Romanis, *Cassia, cinnamomo, ossidiana. Uomini e merci tra Oceano Indiano e Mediterraneo*, Roma, 1996, pp. 19-31.

2 J. P. Cooper, *No easy option: the Nile* versus *the Red Sea in ancient and mediaeval north-south navigation*, in *Maritime Technology in the Ancient Economy: Ship Design and Navigation*, ed. W.V. Harris, K. Iara (Supplement of the Journal of Roman Archaeology, 84), Portsmouth, Rhode

medieval caravan roads bound for Myos Hormos, Berenice or 'Aydhāb usually started no further south than Coptos or Qus (Edfu during the Early Ptolemaic period was just a short-lived exception).

Different combinations of solutions for the sea navigation, desert crossing and river sailing components resulted in a variety of ways for connecting the Nile and the Red Sea. Since each combination had its positive and negative features, none was markedly better than any other. Nonetheless, each one could be deemed more suitable to a particular kind of trade. Very generally, we may say that bigger businesses required larger ships, which would not easily manage the northern part of the Red Sea. Conversely, smaller vessels, less fit for bulky cargoes, could more easily brave the navigation up to Myos Hormos and even up to Clysma, unloading their shipments nearer to the Nile.[3]

A waterway directly connecting the Nile and the Red Sea—repeatedly excavated in antiquity—minimized the desert crossing and river journey, although it required the greatest amount of sea travel and the constant maintenance of a canal linking the river to the Gulf of Suez. Such a solution, which had been ideal for the triremes of the Persian navy during part of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, proved inadequate in the 3rd century BCE for the Ptolemaic elephant carriers (*elephantegoi*). Erected after May/June 264 BCE (l. 27), the Pithom stele triumphantly chronicles the excavation in 270/269 BCE of a canal between the Nile and Red Sea (l. 16), and then the foundation of Ptolemais *epi theron*, on the Sudanese coast, and the capture and shipment by sea and canal of elephants from Ptolemais *epi theron* (ll. 24-25).[4] This enthusiastic account by the Atum priests ignored the extreme difficulty of sending the elephant carriers up to the Suez. Both papyrological and epigraphical evidence show that, not even ten years later, elephants had to come ashore much further south (hence the establishment of a new port at Berenice, 24° lat. N) and get to Edfu on the Nile via a new caravan road.

This itinerary of sea navigation, desert caravan route, and Nile river travel—necessary for the elephant transfer—was less suitable to frankincense and aromatics merchants. Their seagoing ships, smaller than the elephant carriers, could easily sail up to Myos Hormos, from where the most direct Nilotic destination was Coptos. In the course of the second half of the second century

Island, 2012, pp. 194-201; id., *The Medieval Nile. Route, Navigation, and Landscape in Islamic Egypt*, Cairo-New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014, pp. 125-132. In the summer, thanks to the etesian winds (*etesiis flantibus*), the navigation from Iuliopolis to Coptos could take twelve days: Plin., *n.h.* 6.102.

3 Failing to distinguish between ships of different sizes affects, in my view, Cooper's argument (*No easy option*).

4 Urk II 81-105. A recent English translation and further bibliography in K. Mueller, *Settlements of the Ptolemies. City Foundations and New Settlement in the Hellenistic World*, Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006, pp. 192-199.

BCE, the Coptos-Myos Hormos nodes replaced Edfu-Berenice as the main hubs of the commercial transfer between Nile and Red Sea, and it was on that infrastructural base that the Ptolemaic and early Augustan trade in the *Erythra kai Indike thalassa* blossomed—until the discovery of the South Indian emporia, with their huge amounts of black pepper, brought back the use of very large seagoing vessels. The revival of large carriers meant in turn the resurrection of Berenice, the old destination for the Ptolemaic elephant carriers. A new caravan route emerged, connecting the first leg of the Coptos-Myos Hormos road to the last leg of the Edfu-Berenice road. Consequently, the same Nilotic emporium of Coptos served both Myos Hormos, from where smaller ships set sail to South Arabia, East Africa and Northwest India, and Berenice, which served the very large pepper carriers bound for South India.

Under Trajan, a new canal was dug between Nile and Red Sea.[5] Unlike the more or less ephemeral canals of Necho, Darius and Ptolemy Philadelphus, Trajan's canal had a very long life, becoming a permanent presence on the Red Sea in late antiquity. Such longevity is all the more remarkable insofar as it required a periodical maintenance of the canal bed and embankments was achieved by imposing annual *corvées* in order to ensure.[6]

Ample evidence exists to show that Clysma was much more important in late antiquity than in the early imperial period.[7] Still, it is controversial how much of this development is attributable to the canal that connected the Red Sea port and the Nile. Although the commercial relevance of late antiquity Clysma is generally established, opinions differ about the utility to Clysma's traders of a canal that was not navigable all year round. It is debated, in other words, whether the canal's seasonal navigability was suited to the Indian Ocean trade schedule. It has been often claimed that the canal's navigability was, as a rule, restricted to the time when the river was at its maximum.[8] It has been consequently inferred that

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5 A tax for the excavation of the new canal is attested by SB 9545, 32 (September 2nd 112 CE); OMarbpriv (September 15th 112 CE); and probably by OCair GPW 99 (August 25th 112 CE); OEleph DAIK 18 (August 8th 114 CE); OEleph DAIK 19 (August 19th 114 CE); OWilck 89 (August 20th 114 CE); OWilck 90 (August 23rd 114 CE); OWilck 91 (July 25th- August 23rd 114 CE); O. Wilcken 92 (August 29th 113 CE-August 28th 114 CE); OBodl 871 (September 29th 114 CE). On all this, cf. A. Joerdens (with P. Heilporn's and R. Duttenhöfer's *Anhängen*), *Neues zum Trajanskanal*, in *Proceedings of the 24th International Congress of Papyrology. Helsinki, 1-7 August, 2004*, ed. J. Frösén, T. Purola, E. Salmenkivi (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum, 122:1), Helsinki, 2007, pp. 469-485.

6 Maintenance works are attested by POxy 4070 (208 CE?); PCairIsid 81 (April 9th 297 CE); POxy 3814 (3rd-4th cent. CE); POxy 1426 (332 CE); PSI 87 (June 29th 423 CE); PSI 689a (423 CE); PSI 689b (423 CE?); PSI 689d (August 29th 420 CE-August 28th 421 CE); PWashUniv 7 (5th-6th cent. CE).

7 F. De Romanis, 'Τραιανὸς ποταμός. Mediterraneo e Mar Rosso da Traiano a Maometto', in *Controllo degli stretti e insediamenti militari nel Mediterraneo*, ed. R. Villari, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2002, pp. 21-70.

8 C. Redmount, '*The Wadi Tumilat and the "Canal of the Pharaohs"* ', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54:2 (1995), p. 134: "[...] periods when the canal was functional seem to coincide with high Nile

the canal would have been of little use for a commercial enterprise that would have required too early departures and allowed too late returns.[9] It is therefore not a coincidence, as has been pointed out, that the Muziris papyrus loan contract—arguably signed after Trajan's canal was completed—expects the seagoing vessel returning to the Red Sea from Indian lands to connect to Coptos, further south than Clysma.[10]

Admittedly, Trajan's canal did not divert *all* the India trade to Clysma. In particular, it did not divert the South India trade documented by the Muziris papyrus, which was conducted with vessels too large to make the voyage up to Clysma. However, this does not preclude the hypothesis that *a large number* of the ships active in the *Erythrà thálassa* trade were attracted by the navigability of Trajan's to the northernmost reaches of the Red Sea. In the present paper, it will be argued that *Erythrà thálassa* traders could take advantage of the intermittent navigability of Trajan's canal and, consequently, that Clysmas' trade was favored—to some extent—by the addition of a direct water connection to the Nile. In fact, scanty but inequivocal evidence shows that commodities between Alexandria and Clysma could be transferred on water both in the summer, before seagoing vessels set out from Clysma, and in the winter, when the same ships returned to the same harbor.

régimes"; J.-J. Aubert, 'Aux origines du canal de Suez? Le canal du Nil à la mer Rouge revisité', in *Espaces intégrés et ressources naturelles dans l'Empire Romain: actes du colloque de l'Université de Laval-Québec, 5-8 mars 2003*, ed. M. Clavel-Lévèque and E. Hermon, Paris, 2004, p. 228: "[...] ouvert [...] mais de manière intermittente, c'est-à-dire à la saison des crues, de juillet à novembre, voire un peu au delà"; Joerdens, *Neues zum Trajanskanal*, p. 477: "Zwar wird dieser Wasserweg aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach ohnedies nur während der Nilschwelle benutzbar gewesen sein"; F.R. Trombley, ''Amr b. al-'Ās's Refurbishment of Trajan's Canal: Red Sea Contacts in the Aphrodito and Apollōnas Anō Papyri', in *Connected Hinterlands. Proceedings of Red Sea Project IV*, ed. L. Blue, J. Cooper, R. Thomas, J. Whitewright (BAR International Series, 2052), Oxford, 2009, p. 102: "The canal was usable only in the months immediately following the rise of the Nile. The length of its operation depended on the level and duration of the flood, which sometimes lasted until January"; J.P. Cooper, 'Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals: Chronology, Location, Seasonality and Function', in *Connected Hinterlands*, p. 204: "[...] the canal was opened when the Nile was nearing its height, and that it must subsequently have been closed again as water levels fell"; S. Sidebotham, *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011, p. 181: "Later evidence suggests that the canal was not used perennially, but functioned only during the Nile's inundation season—from sometime in September to December/January. Thus, use of the canal would not have been in sync with departure times of ships from the Red Sea ports for destinations in India".

9 Cooper, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, p. 205; J.-J. Aubert, 'Trajan's Canal: River Navigation from the Nile to the Red Sea?', in *Across the Ocean. Nine Essays on Indo-Mediterranean Trade*, ed. F. De Romanis, M. Maiuro, Leiden – New York: Brill 2015, pp. 38-41.

10 Aubert, 'Trajan's Canal: River Navigation from the Nile to the Red Sea?', pp. 37-38. However, the Muziris papyrus sets an example valid only for the South India trade, conducted with ships of very large size.

It is self-evident that Trajan's canal must have been navigable when the water level of the Nile was at its peak and inaccessible when the river was at its lowest. It is sometimes claimed, though, that navigability began *only after* plenitude, which would leave very little time for a departure by the end of September. Such a notion is based on the assumption that in antiquity (when the canal was intermittently navigable) as well as in medieval times (when the canal was never navigable) water was released into the canal only after the river had reached its height.[11] In the middle ages earthen dams, annually constructed, prevented the Nile from inflowing into the canal before plenitude was attained.[12] However, there is no proof that the medieval practices of water management, aimed at irrigating villages of the lower delta, extended back to the Roman period, when there is no evidence for such a procedure, and when the imperial administration had opposite concerns.[13] At any rate, an indication that Trajan's canal *did* allow vessels to reach Clysma on time is given by a well-known passage of Lucian's *Alexander or the False Prophet*:

> ἀναπλεύσας ὁ νεανίσκος εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἄχρι τοῦ Κλύσματος, πλοίου ἀναγομένου ἐπείσθη καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς Ἰνδίαν πλεῦσαι, κἀπειδήπερ ἐβράδυνεν, οἱ δυστυχεῖς ἐκεῖνοι οἰκέται αὐτοῦ, οἰηθέντες ἢ ἐν τῷ Νείλῳ πλέοντα διεφθάρθαι τὸν νεανίσκον ἢ καὶ ὑπὸ λῃστῶν—πολλοὶ δὲ ἦσαν τότε—ἀνῃρῆσθαι, ἐπανῆλθον ἀπαγγέλλοντες αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀφανισμόν.[14]

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11 Trombley, *'Amr b. al-'Ās's Refurbishment of Trajan's Canal*, p. 102: "The canal was usable only in the months immediately following the rise of the Nile [...] Al-Muqaddasī mentions the dams that blocked the canal until its annual opening at the time of the Christian festival of the Exaltation of the Cross (conventionally dated 14 September in the medieval Coptic calendar of festivals)"; Cooper, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, p. 204: "Little is known of the navigational functioning of Persian and Ptolemaic canals that rose near Bubastis. However, their Roman and Arab successor, even enjoying an apparently superior offtake some 65 km further upstream, was almost certainly only navigable on a seasonal basis. The ceremonies marking its annual opening—with the breaking of a dam at its mouth in Cairo—are recorded by Islamic-era authors, who in turn attribute pre-Islamic origins to them. In the early centuries of Islam, these ceremonies took place at 'Ayn Shams (Heliopolis) on the Christian festival of the Veneration of the Cross, the Coptic version of which occurs on the seventeenth day of the month of Tūt in the Coptic calendar, corresponding to 14th September of the Julian calendar".

12 W. Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer. Studies in Ibn Taghrî Birdî's Chronicles of Egypt: I*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 82-87.

13 K. Blouin, *Triangular Landscapes. Environment, Society, and the State in the Nile Delta under Roman Rule*, (Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy), Oxford, 2014, p. 34: "[...]in the second century AD, a series of local, regional and, perhaps too, deltaic transverse waterways facilitated the movements of goods and people within Lower Egypt [...] The digging [...] of such large-scale waterways implies the diversion of important quantities of water into their course and, consequently, a drop of the water draft in the deltaic network and the silting of the more sluggish branches".

14 Luc., *Alex.* 44.

It does not seem appropriate to minimize the value of this passage. Even if it did not refer to a real event and was only "a fictional narrative" made up by a Greek satirist, *it should be acknowledged that Lucian makes the effort to explain in realistic terms* (πολλοὶ δὲ ἦσαν τότε) *the development of the story. Besides, one should not rule out the possibility that Alexander or the False Prophet was written during or after Lucian's stay in Alexandria, when he could very well have known how local merchants reached Clysma.*[15] Although it can be wondered for where exactly the ship was bound, we have no reason not to believe that the text proves that *it was possible to sail from Alexandria to Clysma early enough to get on board ships bound for, allegedly, India.*

On the other hand, there is also evidence to show that when Clysma's ships landed back at their home harbor, Trajan's canal could be still navigated. The first piece of evidence is in a passage of Epiphanius' of Salamis *Panarion*. His overview of the Roman ports in the Red Sea carries the authority of the author's origin from Palaestina and lengthy residence in Egypt.[16]

> ὅρμοι γὰρ τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς θαλάσσης διάφοροι, ἐπὶ τὰ στόμια τῆς Ῥωμανίας διακεκριμένοι, ὁ μὲν εἷς ἐπὶ τὴν Αἰλᾶν [...] ὁ δὲ ἕτερος ὅρμος ἐπὶ τὸ Κάστρον τοῦ Κλύσματος, ἄλλος δὲ ἀνωτάτω ἐπὶ τὴν Βερνίκην καλουμένην, δι' ἧς Βερνίκης καλουμένης ἐπὶ τὴν Θηβαΐδα φέρονται, καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἐρχόμενα εἴδη ἐκεῖσε τῇ Θηβαΐδι διαχύνεται ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀλεξανδρέων διὰ τοῦ Χρυσορρόᾳ ποταμοῦ, Νείλου δέ φημι, τοῦ καὶ Γεὼν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς λεγομένου, καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων γῆν καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ Πηλούσιον φέρεται· καὶ οὕτως εἰς τὰς ἄλλας πατρίδας διὰ θαλάσσης διερχόμενοι οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥωμανίαν ἐμπορεύονται.[17]

Epiphanius mentions only three ports: Aila and Clysma, which are ἐπὶ τὰ στόμια τῆς Ῥωμανίας διακεκριμένοι, and Berenice that lays ἀνωτάτω.[18] As a consequence of the distant locations of the two groups of ports, the Indian commodities are poured *either* over the Thebaid *or* over Alexandria, the whole of Egypt, and Pelusium. The disjunctive conjunction ἤ makes clear that in Epiphanius' view Thebaid on one side and Alexandria, the whole land of Egypt,

[15] Lucian held office in Egypt (Luc., *Apol.* 12), while he was writing his *Apologia* ἐν γήρᾳ — ὑστάτῳ (4). *Alexander or the False Prophet* was written after Marcus Aurelius' death (Luc., *Alex.* 48).

[16] Soz., *h.e.* 6.32.3: Ἐπιφάνιος δὲ ἀμφὶ Βησανδούκην κώμην ὅθεν ἦν, νομοῦ Ἐλευθεροπόλεως. ἐκ νέου δὲ ὑπὸ μοναχοῖς ἀρίστοις παιδευθεὶς καὶ τούτου χάριν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ πλεῖστον διατρίψας χρόνον ἐπισημότατος ἐπὶ μοναστικῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ γέγονε παρά τε Αἰγυπτίοις καὶ Παλαιστίνοις κτλ.

[17] Epiphanius, *panarion* III 16-17.

[18] Epiphanius does not mention any port that may be identified with the 4th century CE military installation (converted into a church in the next century) at Abū Sha'ār, whose epigraphic evidence suggests, though, some commercial role: Sidebotham, *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route*, pp. 182-184.

and Pelusium on the other, are alternative destinations for the Indian commodities depending on which Red sea port they used to enter Egypt. The ships that landed at Berenice sent their cargoes across the caravan roads of the Eastern desert to the Thebaid; those that reached Clysma were sent to the other Egyptian destinations "through the Chrysorrhoas River that is the Nile". There is no doubt that here a navigation through the *Traianos potamos* is suggested. It is therefore apparent that around 375 CE ships loaded with Indian goods arrived at Clysma and proceeded through the *Traianos potamos* up to Alexandria, the rest of Egypt and Pelusium.

Almost two centuries after Epiphanius' *Panarion*, evidence for the movement of Indian commodities through Trajan's canal is provided by a pertinent passage in Olympiodorus' of Alexandria commentary to Aristoteles' *Meteorology*.

> τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ πλοῖα πλείω φόρτον βαστάζουσι ἐπὶ θαλάττης ἤπερ ἐπὶ λίμνης. ἀμέλει διὰ ταύτην τὴν αἰτίαν πολλοὶ ἰνδικοπλεῦσται ναυαγοῦσι μὴ εἰδότες τοῦτο. καὶ ἐν μὲν θαλάσσῃ γεμίζουσιν αὐτὰ φόρτου, καὶ ἡ μὲν θάλασσα διὰ τὸ γεῶδες αὐτῆς ἀνωθεῖ καὶ βαστάζει· ἔρχονται δὲ ἐν ποταμοῖς ἢ λίμναις καὶ ναυαγοῦσι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν οὕτως τὸ γεῶδες ἐκ τῆς καπνώδους ἀναθυμιάσεως καὶ μὴ δύνασθαι ἀνωθεῖν. ἴσως δὲ δυνατὸν καὶ τὴν καπνώδη ἀναθυμίασιν ὡς ἀνωχοῦσαν διὰ τὸ σπεύδειν ἐπὶ τὸ συγγενὲς χωρεῖν, ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ μείζονα τὰ πλοῖα τὰ αὐτὰ πλείω φόρτον βαστάζοντα.[19]

There is no need to emphasize that Olympiodorus was in a position to know very well how Indian commodities were transferred from the Red Sea to the city in which he lived. In order to demonstrate that fresh water is less dense ("has not as much *geodes*") than sea water, Olympiodorus refers to the frequent accidents by Indian Ocean seafarers (ἰνδικοπλεῦσται), who loaded their ships to the maximum limit allowed by the sea waters. When they came to sail in canals or other water bodies (ἐν ποταμοῖς ἢ λίμναις), they sank because of the fresh water's inferior buoyancy. The uninterrupted navigation of Indian Ocean seafarers, first by sea and then by canal and other water bodies, shows that Olympiodorus alludes to a shipment *entirely by water* from the Red Sea to Alexandria.[20]

As stated, it is certain that Trajan's canal was not navigable all year round. Certainly it was not navigable when the Nile was at its shallowest (see fig. 1) and maintenance work took place. In 297 CE, they lasted at least two months after

[19] Olymp., *in mete.* 81.

[20] For the term λίμνη denoting water bodies of the Nile delta, cfr. Blouin, *Triangular Landscapes*, p. 135.

April 9th.[21] In 424 CE, they lasted three months, possibly starting from Pharmouthi 1st (March 26th) or slightly later.[22]

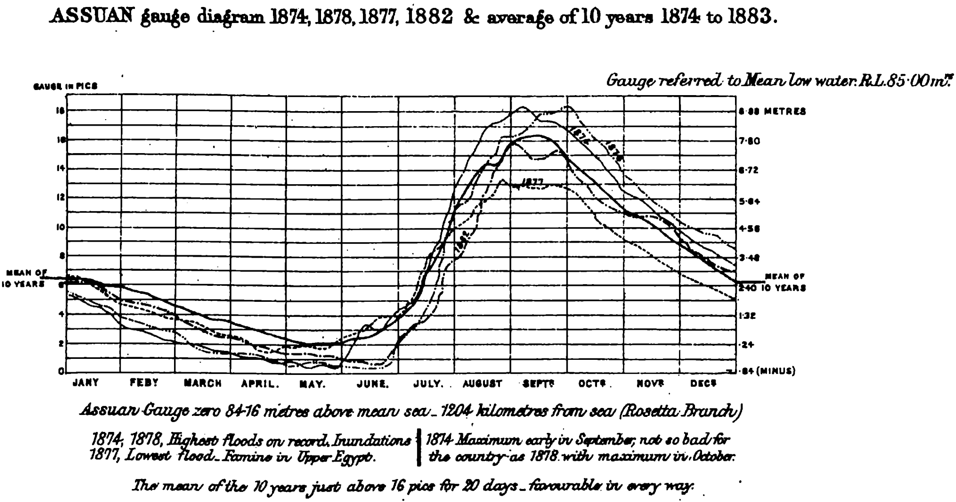


Fig. 1. From W. Willcocks – J.I. Craig, *Egyptian irrigation*, London, 1913³, p. 182

By contrast, it is open to question how many of the remaining two hundred and seventy-five days Trajan's canal was navigable. In this respect, the clearest indication is provided by a papyrus dating back to 710 CE, therefore referring to the canal after it was reopened by ʻAmr b. al-ʻĀs.

> ἔσῃ γὰρ ἐπιστάμενος ὡς <ἐὰν> ὑστερήσῃ(ς)| τὸ ὁτιοῦν ἔκ τε τῶν αὐτῶν εἰδῶν καὶ δαπανῶν| καὶ γένηται ἀπόβασις τῶν ὑδάτων μέλλεις ταῦτα διὰ στράτας| βαστάξαι ἕως τοῦ αὐτοῦ Κλύσματος παρέχων τὸ φόρετρον| αὐτῶν ἐξ ἰδικῆς σο\υ/ ὑποστάσεως.[23]

These lines come from a letter in which Qurra b. Sharik, governor of Egypt, urges Basilios, *dioiketes* of Aphrodito, to convey as soon as possible, before the waters of Trajan's canal recede, what had been already requested in terms of provisions for the ships in Klysma: should Basilios fail to deliver what is due while the canal was

21 SB 7676.

22 PSI 689a, l. 5: χρ(ε)ίαν τῆς τριμήνου; l. 10: ἐργάσασθαι ἐπὶ χρόνον μῆνας τρῖς. It is unclear if in June 29th 423 CE (PSI 87) the three-month service was over.

23 PLond 1346, ll. 16-20.

still navigable, Qurra warns, Basilios will pay the expensive land transport up to Clysma.[24]

The letter is dated January 3rd (Gregorian 7th) 710 CE and was received on February 9th (Gregorian 13th). Therefore, the sentence ἐὰν—γένηται ἀπόβασις τῶν ὑδάτων cannot refer to the beginning of the drop in water level, but must denote the moment when the water level had become so low as to hinder all sailing.[25] This was not the first letter sent by Qurra to Basilios on that matter in that year,[26] nor probably, was it the last.[27] The pressing overtones urging for a prompt action suggest that Qurra was aware that his letter might not be delivered as soon as it was desirable.[28] The thirty-seven days that elapsed between the writing and delivery of PLond 1346 are definitely more than the ten days between the writing and delivery of PLond 1351 and PRossGeorg 4, 16, but they are less than the forty-three days of PLond 1341, and much less than the fifty-nine days of PLond 1379. Nothing suggests that Qurra's demand was preposterous or that the flood was exceptionally late that year and since we have no reason not to assume that PLond 1346 reflects the normal operational pattern of the connections between Clysma and the Nile, we must conclude that Trajan's canal remained navigable well beyond January 3rd. This may not have been sufficient for the South India traders, who had to leave for Egypt in December at the earliest.[29] It is not unlikely, however, that other "Indian Ocean seafarers" could take advantage of the canal's navigability in late winter. Information about the logistics of the India trade in late Antiquity can be inferred from a well-known passage of the *Martyrium Arethae.*

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[24] A road from Babylon to Clysma is attested by the *Itinerarium Antonini* 169, 2 and partially confirmed by CIL III 6633 = ILS 657.

[25] For a difference between the beginning of the drop and the end of the navigability period, cfr. SB 10459 l. 11-12: ἤδη γὰρ ἤρξατο ἀποβαί[νειν τὸ ὕδωρ τοῦ Τραιανοῦ],|[ἐπ]ẹị ἐὰν ἀποβῇ τὸ ὕδωρ ὡς εἴρηται ε̣[.]ρ̣[

[26] Cfr. PLond 1346, ll. 4-11: ἦμεν/ διαστείλαντες διὰ τῆς διοικήσεώς σο\υ/ διάφορα εἴδη|λόγῳ φιλοκαλείας καὶ ἐξαρτίας πλοίων τοῦ Κλύσμα(τος) |ἔτι μὴν καὶ δαπάνην ναυτῶν πλοίων ὄντων ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ|Κλύσματι ἀποστείλαντες πρὸς' σὲ καὶ τὰ τούτων ἐντάγια|πρὸ ἡμερῶν πολλῶν γράψαντες ταῦτα διὰ συντομίας|ἐκπέμψαι πρὸ τοῦ γένηται ἀπόβασις τῶν ὑδάτων τοῦ Τραιανο\ῦ/|καὶ μέχρι τῆς δεῦρο οὐκ ἔπεμψας τί' ποτε ἐκ τούτων ἄξιον λόγο\υ/.

[27] Fragments of other letters by Qurra on the same subject are SB 10459, PLond 1465 and, in Arabic, B.M. Or. 6232 (2). PLond 1465 l. 4: τὸ τέταρτον ἐτάξαμεν διὰ τῆς δι[οικήσεώς σου suggests that they may all belong to the same eight *indictio* (709/710). It seems that Basilios did not succeed, cfr. PLond 1465 l. 1-2: ἐγένετο ἀπόβασις τῶν ὑδάτων τοῦ Τραιανοῦ τοῦ βαστάξαι αὐτὰ διὰ γῆς ἕως το[ῦ] αὐτοῦ Κλ[ύσματος.

[28] PLond 1346, ll. 12-16: δεχόμενος οὖν τὰ παρόντα γράμματα εὐθέως καὶ κατ' αὐτὴν| τὴν ὥραν πέμψον εἴ τί ἐστι διὰ τῆς διοικήσεώς σο(υ)| ἐξ αὐτῶν μὴ ὑστερῶν τι τὸ σύνολον μήτε μὴν δεόμενος| ἑτέρων ἡμῶν γραμμάτων περὶ τούτο(υ) ἐὰν μέντοι συνιεῖς| καὶ ἔχεις φρένας.

[29] Plin., *n.h.* 6.106: ex India renavigant mense Aegyptio Tybi incipiente, nostro Decembri, aut utique Mechiris Aegyptii intra diem sextum, quod fit intra idus Ianuarias nostras.

Κατ' οἰκονομίαν δὲ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰσῆλθον πλοῖα τῶν ἐμπόρων Ῥωμαίων καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Ἰνδῶν καὶ ἐκ τῶν νήσων Φαρσὰν ἑξήκοντα, οὕτως· ἀπὸ μὲν Ἀειλᾶ τῆς πόλεως πλοῖα δεκαπέντε, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Κλύσματος εἴκοσι, ἀπὸ Ἰωτάβης ἑπτά [ἀπὸ Ἰωτάβης δύο **A**], ἀπὸ Βερονίκης δύο [ἀπὸ Βερονίκης ἑπτά **A** *ante* ἀπὸ Ἰωτάβης], ἀπὸ Φαρσὰν ἑπτά, ἀπὸ Ἰνδίας ἐννέα.[30]

We may assume that the traditional route timings to Adulis were beneficial to the divine providence in assembling all those ships from so many different places. We may also assume that (as far as the trade between Egypt and India is concerned) the role of Adulis in late Antiquity was similar to that of Aden in medieval times: it was the place where the Indian commodities passed from the Arabian Sea ships to those bound for the other Red Sea ports. Out of the sixty ships that anchored in the port of Adulis in 524 CE, those from Clysma were as many as twenty, those from Aila fifteen, those from Iotabis seven, those from Farasan Islands also seven, those from Berenice two and those from India nine. The text says nothing about the size of the ships, but it seems likely that the nine ships from India were of much larger size than the thirty-five from Clysma and Aila that had to sail the Red Sea all the way up to its northernmost shores. It seems likely, in other words, that the difference in size between the ships from Clysma and Aila on one side and those from India on the other was comparable to the difference, in pre-Portuguese times, between the ships that exported spices from Calicut to Aden on one side and those that re-exported part of the same spices from Aden to Toro on the other.[31]

The winter anchorage in Adulis of ships from Clysma, Aila and India[32] suggests that the ships from India had arrived from north-west India in *early winter*, sailing during what the rasulid almanacs call the *dīmānī* season. In fact, timetable of the sea routes between Adulis and India could hardly radically depart from the sailing seasons between India and Aden as described in the rasulid almanac

30 *Martyrium Arethae* 29. For an evaluation of the passage, see V. Christides, 'What went wrong in the long distance Roman naval power', in *Graeco-Latina et Orientalia. Studia in honorem Angeli Urbani heptagenarii*, ed. S. Kh. Samir and J.P. Monferrer-Sala (Syro-Arabica, 2), Cordoba: Oriens Academic, 2013, p. 75.

31 Duarte Barbosa, *Livro em que dá relação do que viu e ouviu no Oriente*, Lisboa, 1946, pp. 160-161: "Estes no tempo que prosperaram nos seus tratos e navegação, faziam nesta cidade naus de quilha de mil e mil duzentos bahares de cárrega [...] partiam desta cidade cada monção dez e quinze naus destas para o mar Roxo, Adem e Meca, onde vendiam muito bem suas mercadorias. Algumas ha hos mercadores de Juda, que dahy has leuauaom em pequenos nauios ha ho Toro, e do Toro hiaom ha ho Cairo". Apparently, the Toro ships were smaller ('em pequenos nauios'), than the Calicut ships, whose tonnage—within 200 tons—was also rather modest.

32 *Martyrium Arethae* 29: πεποίηκε δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς Ἰνδικὰ δέκα πλοῖα ἐν τῷ χειμῶνι [ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ χειμῶνι AHKDP] τῆς αὐτῆς τρίτης ἰνδικτίονος, φιλοκαλήσας τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα.

written in 1271 CE by the Yemeni sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf 'Umar ibn Yūsuf, where a distinction is made between a *dīmānī* season (early winter monsoon) and a *tīrmāh* season (late winter monsoon). The ships that sailed according to the *dīmānī* season were supposed to leave India—actually North-West India—on October 16th, to arrive at Aden between November 6th and December 21st, and to start they return voyage between March 26th and May 6th[33] This schedule does not apply to South India, off of which the unfavorable South-West monsoon keeps blowing at least until November 15th (see fig. 2). In the first century CE, ships bound for Egypt used to leave between December and January 13th.[34] In medieval times, Calicut ships left for Aden as late as February/March.[35] In al-Ashraf's almanac, ships from South India sailing with the *tīrmāh* season reach Aden by April 15th and leave from there by August 21st.[36]

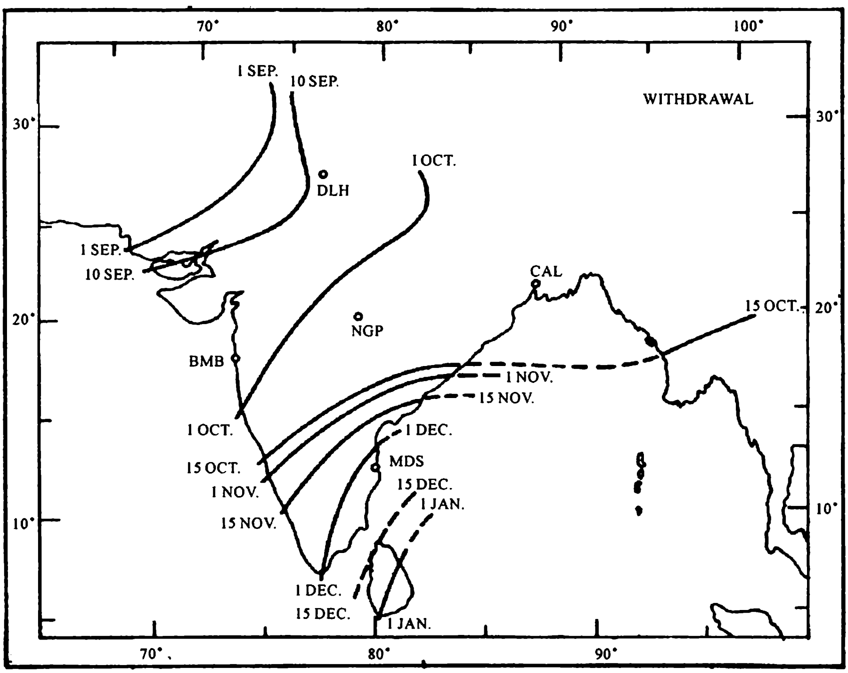


Fig. 2. Normal dates of end of SW Monsoon (Source: IMD)

[33] D. M. Varisco, *Medieval Agriculture and Islamic Science. The Almanac of a Yemeni Sultan*, Seattle and London: University of Washington, 1994, pp. 23, 25, 27, 31, 33 (English translation); 42, 43, 45, 50, 52 (Arabic text).

[34] Cf. *supra* nt. 29.

[35] F. De Romanis, 'Time to Repay a Maritime Loan: A Note on SB III 7169 and SB XVIII 13167 Recto', *Sileno* 40 (2014), pp. 83-89.

[36] Varisco, *Medieval Agriculture and Islamic Science*, pp. 32 (English translation), 51 (Arabic text).

An arrival at Adulis any time in November/December would have left enough time for the Clysma ships to re-export the Indian commodities to their home port while Trajan's canal was still navigable. Conversely, those ships returning from South India and Sri Lanka reached Adulis too late for their cargoes to be transferred via Trajan's canal. Along with the Thebaid demand for Indian commodities, the persistence of trade activities in Berenice during late Antiquity owes not a little to the delayed timing of the oceanic crossing from South India.

The Christology of saint Gregentius, archbishop of Taphar (Ẓafār)

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One of the lesser-known saints of Church is saint Gregentius, whose memory is celebrated on December 19. According to the *Synaxarion* (the Book of the Lives of Saints), he lived in the 6th century AD; he was born in Mediolanum[1] and his parents' names were Agapios and Theodoti. Being from his childhood very pious, he was ordained deacon in a legal age and then devoted himself to ascetic life.

When the archbishop of Ethiopia died, the king of the country, whose name was Elesbaan, asked from the Patriarch of Alexandria to send him a virtuous and wise archbishop to shepherd his country. At that time Gregentius was in Alexandria and the Patriarch, seeing how qualified he was, ordained him archbishop and sent him to Ethiopia, were he was welcomed with enthousiasm.

Later the king Elesbaan conquered the land of Homerites (Yemen today), where the Christian Homerite inhabitants were persecuted by the Jews[2]. He appointed there a Christian king and left also Gregentius in the country to regulate ecclesiastical issues. Gregentius ordained elders and deacons, built new temples and worked successfully in attracting Jews to Christianity. He died on December 19, 552 having done marvels in the country. [3]

Because of the relatively little information we have about saint Gregentius many questions arise about him. One of them is whether he was orthodox or monophysite. According to one version he must have been monophysite because he is supposed to be ordained archbishop by the monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria Timotheos[4]. There is information that he was ordained from the

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1 According to another version Gregentius was born in Lyplianes in the country of the Avars (See *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar. Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation*, edited by Albrecht Berger with a contribution by Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Berlin – New York 2006, pp. 1 and 804).

2 For the relations between Jews and Christians in Arabia during that period see Joëlle Beaucamp, Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet and Christian Julien Robin, *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles: régards croisés sur le sources*, (Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Monographies, 32), Paris, 2010.

3 All this information concerning St. Gregentius' life is mainly drawn from *'Ο Μέγας Συναξαριστής τῆς 'Ορθοδόξου 'Εκκλησίας*, ed. Victor Matthaiou, Athens, 1966[2],vol. 12, pp. 571-580.

4 See V. Christides, 'The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia in the acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 A.D.)', *Annales d'Éthiope* 9 (1972), pp. 115-146.

orthodox Patriarch Proterios[5], but this information is problematic from a chronological point of view[6]. According to another version he was orthodox given that his name is included in the orthodox hagiologion and not in the monophysitic[7].

The one or the other version can be strengthen by the systematic study of the Christology of saint Gregentius in his 'Dialexis' (dialogue) with the Jewish teacher Herban, that is reportedly recorded by Palladius, a secretary of saint Gregentius[8]. The authenticity of this dialogue is questioned due to lack of other relevant evidence and the text is assumed to be written by a rather later writer who elaborated an older tradition about the missionary work of Gregentius for the Christianization of Jews[9]. It may however be written shortly after the death of Gregentius, given that later Arabia become the center of Islam, therefore the elaboration in question could be done in the early 7th century at the latest[10]. In any case 'Dialexis' is the best we have about the teaching of saint Gregentius.

5 See K. Doukakis, *'Ο Μέγας Συναξαριστής*, Vol. 4, Ἀθῆναι 1954², p. 444. Cf V. Grumel, 'Gregentius', *Catholicisme* V (1962), col. 229.

6 See V. Christides, 'The Himyarite-Ethiopian War', p. 123. Cf J. de Soyres, 'Gregentius', *A Dictionary of Christian Biography* II (1880), p. 730. For more on the various problems concerning the person and the mission of Gregentius in Ethiopia and Arabia from a historical point of view see V. Christides, 'The martyrdom of Arethas and the aftermath: History vs. Hagiography', *Proceedings of the sixth international congress of Graeco-oriental and African studies Nicosia 30 April - 5 May 1996*, (Graeco-Arabica, vols VII-VIII, 1999-2000), Nicosia, 2000, pp. 51-91 and especially pp. 64-75, G. Fiaccadori, 'Gregentios in the land of the Homerites', contribution in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, ed. by A. Berger, pp. 48-82 and especially pp. 72-82.

7 See Angeliki Chatziioannou, 'Hagiological problems: The case of saint Gregentius', *Graeco-Arabica* XI (2011), pp. 309-318. Compromising the conflicting information of the sources A. Papathanasiou supports that before Gregentius a monophysite archbishop was sent in South Arabia, who died shortly after his enthroning (*Οι 'Νόμοι των Ομηριτών'*, Athens-Komotini, 1994, pp. 41-45).

8 *Τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις Γρηγεντίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου γενομένου Τεφρῶν, Διάλεξις μετά Ἰουδαίου Ἑρβᾶν τούνομα*, Patrologia Graeca (forward cited: PG) 86a, 768 B. To St. Gregentius himself is attributed a work entitled 'Νόμοι τῶν Ὁμηριτῶν' (Laws of the Homerites). Its authenticity is questioned but that does not matter in what concerns us here because in the text of the Laws there is no evidence neither whether Gregentius was monophysite or not, nor about the conflicts between orthodox chalcedonians and monophysites, as has been rightly said (Ch. Papastathis, 'Περί των 'Νόμων' των Ομηριτών του Αγίου Γρηγεντίου', *Graeco-Arabica* IV [1991], pp. 125-126). As for another work that is attributed directly to St. Gregentius entitled 'Κατά ἀζύμων' (Against the unleavened bread) the only thing we know is that we owe its discovery to V. Christides (Ch. Papastathis, 'Περί των 'Νόμων' των Ομηριτών', p. 117, ftn. 18).

9 St. Papadopoulos, 'Γρηγέντιος', *Θρησκευτική καί Ἠθική Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία* 4 (1964), col. 688. A. Berger deduces that 'Dialexis' (as well as the other works concerning St. Gregentius) 'was written, approximately in the middle of the tenth century or shortly thereafter, by an anonymous author' (*Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, p. 107), enlongating thereby its temporal dinstance from the 6th century, in comparison to other researchers.

10 P. Christou, *Ἑλληνική Πατρολογία*, vol. 5, Thessaloniki, 1992, p. 127. According to archbishop of Tirana and All Albania Anastasios Yiannoulatos Gregentius perhaps participated indirectly in

Coming to the content of the text we see that St. Gregentius, applying a basic principle of apologetic theology, the defence of christian faith by arguments suited to the way of thinking of the opponents[11], tries to convince Herban of the truth of Christianity relying on the Scripture that he (Herban) accepted, i.e. the Old Testament for the Christians. Quoting and analysing quite a few passages points out to Herban, and to all attending the debate (among them state officials, the king himself and many Jews), that Christian teaching is vindicated by the books of the Old Testament, especially those of the Prophets. For the incredulous Jews to be convinced however some miracles were needed at the end[12].

Regarding the Christology that emerges from the text, according to some epigrammatic references the chalcedonian (i.e. the orthodox) points of Dialexis are obvious[13] and 'nowhere in it exist propositions indicating any monophysitic teaching on the personality of Christ'[14]. Proceeding to a more detailed analysis of the dialogue we see not only that the above remarks are correct but also that all the arguments of saint Gregentius to persuade Jews to become Christians lean on the orthodox Christology. His opposition to monophysitism and other Christological heresies is also evident. For argument's sake we will cite specific examples from the dialogue.

First of all we see that the Christology of saint Gregentius is interrelated with the orthodox Triadology. As expected, almost at the beginning of the dialogue Herban asks for explanations about the trinitarian doctrine, which seems to him weird and suspect of tritheism. St. Gregentius clarifies that the Godhead is one, God is one in three persons or hypostases. We call *Father* the mind of Almighty as cause of everything, we call *Son* His Word (Logos) as originating from the Father and we call *Spirit* the Spirit as emanating from the Father and resting to His Word. These three persons constitute one Godhead, so we acknowledge trinity of persons, i.e. of hypostases, in one and the same Godhead[15]. Thereafter the main concern of saint Gregentius is to prove to Herban that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah, to whom the prophecies of the Old Testament refer.

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the drafting of the works attributed to him (*Ἰσλάμ. Θρησκειολογική ἐπισκόπησις*, Athens, 1975 [rep. 1993], p. 63, ftn. 56).

11 St. Gregory of Nyssa expresses eloquently this basic principle: '. . . χρή, καθώς εἴρηται, πρός τάς προλήψεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων βλέπειν καί κατά τήν ἐγκειμένην ἑκάστῳ πλάνην ποιεῖσθαι τόν λόγον, ἀρχάς τινας καί προτάσεις εὐλόγους ἐφ' ἑκάστης διαλέξεως προβαλλόμενον, ὡς ἄν διά τῶν παρ' ἀμφοτέροις ὁμολογουμένων ἐκκαλυφθείη κατά τό ἀκόλουθον ἡ ἀλήθεια' (*Λόγος Κατηχητικός*, Πρόλογος, Βιβλιοθήκη Ἑλλήνων Πατέρων καί Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Συγγραφέων 68,379[1-5]).

12 Cf E. Mangenot, 'Gregentius (Saint)', *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* VI (1915), col. 1776: 'La vérité de la religion chrétienne est prouvée dans ce dialogue par l'accomplissement des prophéties de l'Ancien Testament et par les miracles'.

13 Ch. Papastathis, 'Περί των 'Νόμων' των Ομηριτών', p. 126.

14 Angeliki Chatziioannou, 'Hagiological problems', p. 311.

15 PG 86a,625 B – 628 A.

In this effort he invokes, inter alia, the verse of Psalms 'for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption'[16] to connect it with the resurrection of Christ. Herban, thinking that he has found a contradiction in the words of his interlocutor, supports that if this verse is really connected with Jesus Christ, then Christ cannot be Son of God but only a servant, a slave, because 'thou wilt not leave my soul in hell' is not voice of a master but voice of a servant or supplication from an inferior to a superior[17].

The answer of saint Gregentius shows indisputably his orthodox spirit. He says characteristically: My Lord has been human as well, having two natures . . . and two wills, one though and the same hypostasis. So the submissive voice belongs to his created human nature. Christ is Lord, as preexistent Son of God, and slave either, as human. The Son of God himself wanted to become also human, in order to beat by the form of the slave, the human one, the devil and liberate mankind of sin, in which it was enslaved to infringement of Adam and Eve in Paradise[18].

It is obvious here that the orthodox Christology is projected as the only effective for a dialogue like that and is essentially the basis of all arguments of saint Gregentius. A monophysite could not easily escape from the trap of Herban. If the human nature of Christ was absorbed by the divine and disappeared into the infinity of Godhead, already from the first moment of the union of the two natures, as monophysites supported, then Erban would be right to question the designation 'slave' for Christ and the connection of His person with the relevant prophecies of the Old Testament. Accepting, on the contrary, that Christ is slave having only one nature, the divine, necessarily means that He is inferior to Father. Facing such a dilemma it is obvious that a monophysite would have been in deadlock.

Remarkable as well is the fact that saint Gregentius talks not only about two natures of Christ but also about two wills. This is an innuendo against the heresy of monotheletism, which came from monophysitism as a moderate version of it, in an attempt at reconciliation of monophysites with the followers of the doctrine of Chalcedon[19]. So Monophysitism is rejected in all its versions.

The same also applies to the diametrically opposed to monophysitism heresy, i.e. Nestorianism, which accepted not only two natures but also two persons in Christ dividing Him essentially into two Christs, one for each nature. As we saw, saint Gregentius declares explicitly that the two natures of Christ are in one and

16 Ps 15 (16), 10.

17 PG 86a,645 B-D.

18 PG 86a,645 D – 648 B.

19 From a historical point of view this indirect reference to monotheletism is regarded as an evidence that the text of 'Dialexis', at least in its present form, is subsequent to the days of saint Gregentius.

the same hypostasis; besides he often calls the All-holy 'Theotokos' (Mother of God) unlike nestorians who rejected this designation.

When Herban asked him how he can call God 'the begotten of Mary', he replied that 'God and man the same worthily begot',[20] and to the next question, how the uterus of woman held the size of Godhead, he gave the answer that as the fire did not burn the bush in the desert, so the Virgin gave birth and after the childbirth she remained virgin, i.e. miraculously[21].

In another chance saint Gregentius throws out innuendoes against all the Christological heresies. Interpreting the passage of prophet Isaiah 'behold, all that they were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded',[22] he connects it with the Jews, whom he includes among heretics as the worst opponents of Christ. He mentions concretely: "No one opposes to my Lord Jesus Christ so much as you, the accursed, the unbelievers. The opponents of the other heresies are partly in comparison with you opposed to Him"[23]. Who exactly the heretics are, and who oppose to Christ less than the Jews is revealed in the process.

Herban asks from Gregentius evidence from some prophet that Christ is God and man just like he describes Him. Before he does this Gregentius unfolds his Christology more than any other time saying to him: I told you that Godhead made for itself humanity, which suffered passions. Jesus Christ came from the pure blood of the Virgin and Mother of God, who was descendant of David, without intercourse with a man, one of two natures even after the incarnation ('εἷς ἐκ δύο καί μετά τήν ἐνανθρώπησιν'). His humanity had all I have except sin, and His divinity all Father had except being unbegotten. (Father) God is unbegotten, Logos (the Word of God) is begotten and in one hypostasis His divinity and His humanity are aligned because His flesh did not come from sperm but the Word of God instead of sperm brings flesh into the bowels of the Mother of God without His divinity being modified or altered at the slightest. And this is because the deity is unchangeable and unalterable[24].

In this passage, which is similar to the 'term of faith' of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in its paragraph on the union of divine and human nature in the person of Christ[25], the relatively developed Christology reflects the intense controversies between the orthodox teaching and all the Christological and the rest of heresies. Almost every sentence is an answer to some heresy. The phrase 'εἷς ἐκ δύο καί

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20 In the sense, of course, that the All-holy begot the Son of God as human, not that she begot Him as God.

21 PG 86a,657 A.

22 Is. 41:11.

23 PG 86a,708 D.

24 PG 86a,709 B-C.

25 See I. Karmiris, *Τά Δογματικά καί Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, vol. I, Athens, 1960^2, p. 175.

μετά τήν ἐνανθρώπησιν' (one [Christ] of two [natures] even after the incarnation) is opposed to Nestorianism and mainly to Monophysitism. The sentence for the perfection of human nature of Christ is opposed to Apollinarism (partly to Arianism either), which accepted the imperfect human nature in Christ. Similarly the sentence that Logos (the Word of God) has everything Father has, except being unbegotten, is opposed to all Arians who denied the consubstantiality of the Son to the Father. All these are consequently the heretics who oppose to Christ 'partly' in comparison with the Jews who oppose to Him fully.

Gregentius certainly seems to be concerned more about the heresy of Monophysitism which was rife in his days; that is why he emphasizes more than anything the fact that Christ had two natures united in his hypostasis. Besides, as we said earlier, this was the best way to deal with the Jewish teacher Herban, since part of his strategy was to dispute either the divinity or the mortality of Christ[26]. The basic principle of saint Gregentius throughout the dialogue is the Christology of two natures which is condensed in the following phrase: As I said earlier, my Lord Jesus was double, God and human . . . between the two natures there was one and the same Word of God, the inherent[27].

Therefore, if 'Dialexis' is a concise presentation of the whole teaching of saint Gregentius, then it appears that saint Gregentius was distinguished not only for his very important missionary work, so as to be named equal to the Apostles[28], but also for his struggle against heresies. This explains why his name is included in the Orthodox hagiologion and not in the Monophysitic one. Consequently this vindicates the view that the mission of saint Gregentius is connected with the defence of the prestige of the Fourth Ecumenical Council[29].

The historical credibility of 'Dialexis' is questioned[30]. It is certain, however, that the Christology of saint Gregentius in this text is in accordance with the declarations of the Council of Chalcedon and without any doubt it leads to the conclusion that saint Gregentius was Orthodox[31].

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26 At some point of the dialogue Herban, speaking to Gregentius, says: that Christ became mortal scandalizes my spirit (PG 86a,657 B).

27 PG 86a,672 A-B.

28 St. Papadopoulos, 'Γρηγέντιος', p. 688.

29 Angeliki Chatziioannou, 'Hagiological problems', p. 317.

30 Nevertheless, A. Papathanasiou says: We do not have other testimonies for the reality of this dialogue but, even if it owes its present form to a subsequent recording, it bears evidence which concurs to its historicity (*Οι 'Νόμοι των Ομηριτών'*, p. 51).

31 Even A. Berger, who denies the historicity of the dialogue between Gregentius and Herban, accepts that 'Dialexis' comes clearly from an Orthodox environment (*Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, p. 105).

Pax Aethiopica, diplomatic missions and immunity in Nubia and Ethiopia (2nd – middle 6th century AD)

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The Nubian and Ethiopian territories in Late Antiquity were home to different migrant tribes, hostile to each other (e.g. Nobadians, Beja, Noba, Beja), a dying Meroitic empire, an expanding Axumite empire and different peoples, living in the Nubian dry lands, on the borders of the Nile and on the Ethiopian plateaux. The Late Roman, early Byzantine civilization in Egypt can be considered the role model for these peoples and tribes. It was *de facto* marked by the *Pax Romana*,[1] a political ideal and a result of ideological praxis in the Roman Empire, later replaced and supplemented by the *Pax Byzantina* and the notion of *Oikoumene*[2] after the official introduction of Christianity.

While the Nubian-Egyptian *limiton*[3] was the scene of border politics, war, diplomacy, confrontation and peace, the *periphereia*[4] south of it was a territory where the Roman-Byzantines as well as Semitic and African nations and civilizations met. The *Pax Romana* here became a *Pax Aethiopica.*

Peace and war with their accompanying activities are reflected in the preserved official documents of the Roman-Byzantines, the Blemmyes, the Nubians and Axumites, i.e. in the inscriptions of Silko, Ezana and unknown Axumite kings, the letter of Phonen, the Tantani and Gebelein texts, several

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1 The *de facto* period of *Pax Romana* lasted from about 27 BC until ca. 180 AD. – Edward Gibbon (*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836) is often credited to be the first modern scholar to have defined the *Pax Romana* in an ideological context.

2 Hélène Ahrweiler-Glykatzi, *Η πολιτική ιδεολογία της βυζαντινής αυτοκρατορίας*, Greek translation by Toula Drakopoulou, Athens: Psychogios, 1977, pp. 11-29; Hans-Georg Beck, *Η βυζαντινή χιλιετία*, Greek translation by D. Kourtovik, Athens, Papadimas, 1992, pp. 105-107 - B. Hendrickx, 'Oikoumene en periphereia in die Mare Erythraeum-gebied in die vroeg-Christelike periode', Akroterion 41:1-2 (1996), pp. 74-82.

3 Ph. Mayerson, 'The Meaning of the Word *Limes* (*limiton*) in the Papyri', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 77 (1989), pp. 287-91- There are different interpretations for the "outer limes", the "inner" one being the whole internal border region (or province) up till the frontier. The "outer" frontier can thus be interpreted as the borderline (with its forts) itself, although - strangely - it has also been understood as the adjacent foreign territory. As for the Egyptian-Nubian *limes*, the texts compiled in Tormod Eide, Tomas Hägg, Richard Holton Pierce and László (eds), *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum, vol. III. From the first to the sixth century AD*, Bergen: University of Bergen, 1998, provide useful information.

4 Hendrickx, 'Oikoumene en periphereia', pp. 74-82.

Byzantine narrative texts, archaeological testimonies (such as pictures, sculptures, thrones and temples), and even up to a point in the Ethiopian *Kebra Negast.*

1. *Εἰρήνη and πόλεμος*

The surviving *official* documents present us with the central notion of *εἰρήνη* as opposed to *πόλεμος*. This *εἰρήνη*, which is presented as a central ideological ideal in the propaganda of the royals of different tribes and *ἔθνη*, can be defined from their documents.

1.1. The first 'group' of documents is the Silko-Phonen one[5]. Silko's wars from Primis to Talmis against the Blemmyes bring *εἰρήνη* to these who accept submission (line 7). The opposite choice, ongoing war and rebellion, leads to destruction and punishment. The Blemmyan *basileus* Phonen, the foe of the Nubian King Silko and his successor Abourni, also puts *εἰρήνη* as a high priority: it was Silko who broke the peace, and Phonen had sent an embassy to him or to Abourni[6] to make peace, but the Nobadian king killed the messengers (πρεσβευτ[ὰς]). Nevertheless, Phonen (lines 27-28) insisted on peace, to which he gave an extended meaning, also defining it as *concord* (and thus not only submission) (line 10: ὁμόνια) as well as *preservation of the population* (line 3: τῆς σωτηρίας τοῦ ὄχλου σου). In both cases, i.e. of Silko and Phonen, *εἰρήνη* can be defined by its opposites: lack of peace brings destruction of cattle (thus hunger and poverty), slavery for women and children, death and sufferance for men (Silko, lines 20-22: 'I don't let them to sit quiet in the shadow, but in the sun outside, and they didn't take a drink of water in their house. For those who offer resistance to me, I carry off their women and children'). Fighting itself is about territory, cattle, pasturing, sheep, land and homes (Phonen, lines 10-11; cf. Silko, lines 18, 21).

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5 Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes,* Vol. III, no. 317, pp. 1147-1152 and no. 319, pp. 1158-1164 – Also J. Rea, 'The letter of Phonen to Aburni', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 34 (1979), pp. 147-162 – T.C. Skeat, 'A letter from the King of the Blemmyes to the King of the Noubades', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 63 (1977), pp. 159-170 – Benjamin Hendrickx, *Official Documents written in Greek Illustrating the Ancient History of Nubia and Ethiopia (3rd Century B.C. - 6th Century A.D.)*, (Monumenta Afro-Hellenica, 1), Johannesburg: Institute for Afro-Hellenic Studies, 1984, no. 16, pp. 75-80 - In this article we use the edition and translation of Phonen's letter by R. Holton Pierce (in Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török, *Fontes*), because his interpretation and reconstruction of the text's structure are by far the most logical and workable ones. We use Hendrickx, Documents, for the Silko inscription.

6 It is not easy to understand from the text who exactly was responsible for what. Certainly Silko as well as Abourni rejected peace and did not respect the immunity of envoys: cf. Holton Pierce, in Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes,* III, p. 1162, note 796.

Finally, Silko celebrated and boasted about his deeds and the peace he brought in his inscription, where - below it - there is a drawing portraying the ruler being crowned by a Winged Victory with a crown decorated with Ancient Egyptian emblems and resembling the Ballana crowns, while Silko himself is styled as a Roman emperor with a *paludamentum*, short tunic and sword.[7]

1.2. The second 'group' is the Axumite one. Firstly, the unknown Axumite King of the inscription in the *Monumentum Adulitanum*[8] states that he started his conquest 'having commanded the peoples nearest of my kingdom to keep the peace' (lines 2-4: "τὰ μὲν ἔγγιστα τοῦ βασιλείου μου ἔθνη εἰρηνεύεσθαι κελεύσας ἐπολέμησα καὶ ὑπέταξα μάχαις τὰ ὑπογεγραμμένα ἔθνη")[9]. After summing up the *ἔθνη*[10] he subjected, he describes their condition after their subjection, which widely varied: probably the Annine and Metine, but surely the Sesea were not only defeated but also taken prisoners while their young men, women, girls and children were carried off, with their belongings, as personal booty of the King himself. The Rausai on the other hand, and the *ethnos* of the Solate, were subjected and obliged 'to keep guard over the sea coasts' (lines 21-22: "οἷς καὶ τοὺς αἰγιαλοὺς τῆς θαλάσσης φυλάσσειν ἐκέλευσα"). All these nations which were protected by mighty mountains - thus the text continues - were overthrown in battles, and 'I [the King] allowed them to keep all their lands as tributaries' (line 24: "ἐχαρισάμην αὐτοῖς πάσας τὰς χώρας ἐπί φόροις"). In fact, however – so boasts the unknown king - 'most of the other peoples submitted to me voluntary and paid tribute' (lines 24-25: "ἄλλα δὲ πλεῖστα ἔθνη ἑκόντα ὑπετάγοι μοι ἐπὶ φόροις"). Even the Arrabitai and Kinaidokolpitai across the Red Sea, underwent the same fate (lines 24-2: "ὑποτάξας αὐτῶν τοὺς βασιλέας φόρους τῆς γῆς τελεῖν ἐκέλευσα καὶ ὁδεύεσθαι μετ' εἰρήνης καὶ πλέεσθαι"). At the end of the inscription, the unknown king closed the *εἰρήνη*-circle, started in the first lines of the text, with the pompous statement that from Leuke Kome to the land of the Sabaeans, all these nations that were conquered, received peace: "ἐν εἰρήνῃ καταστήσας πάντα τὸν ὑπ' ἐμοὶ κόσμον κατῆλθον εἰς τὴν Ἀδουλί". In Adoulis a throne was erected[11] and dedicated to Ares, while sacrifices were

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7 Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes*, Vol. III, p. 1151.

8 Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes*, III, no. 234, pp. 948-952 – Hendrickx, Documents, no. 5, pp. 35-45.

9 Yuri M. Kobishchanov, *Axum*, translated from Russian by Lorraine T. Kapitanoff, University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979, p. 43 interprets the preservation of 'peace' by the peoples nearest to the original Axumite Kingdom as a preservation of 'neutrality'.

10 The unknown king calls the peoples he has subdued 'nations' (ἔθνη). For the identification of and commentary on these 'nations' see mainly Hendrickx, *Documents*, pp.40-43 with references to older works; also Kobishchanov, *Axum*, pp. 43-45.

11 For the erection of thrones by the Axumite rulers, see mainly Kobishchanov, *Axum*, pp. 26, 44 (drawing of reconstruction), 66, 82, 86, 97, 115, 120, 133, 138, 147-9, 154, 191, 196, 206, 211, 217, 230, 253.

offered to Zeus, Ares and Poseidon 'for the safety of those who sail the sea' (lines 35-39).

Two main conclusions regarding 'peace' and 'war' can be drawn from the *Monumentum Adulitanum*:

(i) peace is the result of war and is obtained through victory vs. submission. The overthrown groups are obliged to render some service and to pay tribute. Those who don't surrender, suffer the consequences, i.e. plundering, slavery, even annihilation; and

(ii) the Kings of the subjected groups were allowed to keep their position and lands, indicating a vassal relationship between subjected king and 'Great (Axumite) King', which was the result of God's will ("... τὸν μέγιστον Θεὸν μου Ἄρην ..., δι' οὗ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ὁμοροῦντα τῇ ἐμῇ γῇ...") (lines 29-32). Good will and voluntary submission (ἑκόντα, line 25) were hereby important to safeguard a smooth continuity of activities and commerce (ὁδεύεσθαι μετ' εἰρήνης καὶ πλέεσθαι, line 28).

This co-existence of more than one king in one domain is also illustrated by the inscription of an unknown king of Axum at Meroe (ca. 320 AD)[12], a text with many lacunae, which however clearly indicates hostile opposition (ἀντιδίκησαν, line 2), devastation (ἐξεπόρθησα, line 3), two kings (the unknown Axumite king [lines 1,2] and another [local] king [σὺν τῷ βασιλεῖ, line 8]), perhaps plundering and slavery ([...]ατηγοὺς καὶ τέκνα ... [line 9]), and – of course - taxation (ἐπί φόροι[ς) (line 13).

Two other texts have been connected with the previous one by T. Hägg, namely a Greek text in Meroe City, temple KC 102, from a King of Axum (3rd or 4th Century AD)[13] and the inscription at Abba Pantaleon (in Ethiopia)[14]. It is, however, difficult to see how the latter document has any relation to the situation in Meroe[15].

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12 A.H. Sayce, 'A Greek inscription of a King (?) of Axum found at Meroe', *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 31 (1909), pp. 189ff. - T. Hägg, 'A new Axumite inscription in Greek from Meroe', *Meroitica* 7 (1984), p. 436, note 1; B. Hendrickx, 'A propos des inscriptions axoumites de Meroe', *Acta Classica* 40 (1997), pp. 90-95 - Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes,* III, no. 285, pp. 1066-1070.

13 Hägg, 'A new Axumite inscription in Greek from Meroe', pp. 436-441 - Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes,* III, no. 286, pp. 1070-1072.

14 E. Littmann, 'Sabaische, Griechische und Altabessinische Inschriften', Berlin: DAR, 1913, IV, pp. 2-3, no. 2 – Hendrickx, 'A propos des inscriptions axoumites de Meroe', pp. 92-95, with a critical discussion of Hägg's proposal.

15 Cf. Hendrickx, 'A propos des inscriptions axoumites de Meroe', p. 93.

Ezana's inscriptions belong to the same Axumite 'group'. In his trilingual pagan inscription (1st half of 4th Century AD)[16], Ezana[17] describes the defeat of some Beja kinglets (*basiliskoi*) who had revolted against him (ἀτακτησάντων, line 6) by his brothers Saizana and Adephas. The rebels surrendered and were resettled together with their camp-followers, 3,112 cattle animals, and ca. 6024(?)[18] sheep and pack animals. However they received – in order to survive – cattle, grain, wine, beer and water each day in the following quantities: 22,000 wheaten cakes and wine[19] for a number of months, as long as they were on their way to Matlia, where they were to be resettled. The six *basiliskoi* (accompanied by 400 persons of their own people) thus received 25,140 cattle animals. While it is difficult to assess these numbers, without doubt grossly exaggerated, the 'pattern of peace' is evident, although the term *εἰρήνη* is not used in the text. In fact the Beja were already in a vassal-position, but had revolted and were defeated again. War brought them punishment: displacement and resettlement and loss of cattle. But, on the other side, the resettled *basiliskoi* retained their position; whether the land they received was smaller, less fertile etc. than the land they lost, is not known; they received 'subsidies'[20] in the form of food, drinking and cattle to continue their life and existence after resettlement.[21]

16 Hendrickx, *Documents,* no. 10, pp. 53-55. A new version of the Greek text was first published by E. Bernand, 'Nouvelles versions de la champagne du roi Ezana contre les Bedja', *Zeitschrift für Papyriologie und Epigraphik* 45 (182), pp. 105-114 (with photo) - See also Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes,* III, no. 298, pp. 1094-1100, and especially the commentary by Török, who clearly explains the difference (and confusion) regarding the 2 Greek versions and the 3 texts on the same monolithic granite *stela,* one Greek, one Ge'ez written in South Arabian script and one in non-vocalized Ethiopic (pp. 1095 and 1097-1100)– Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*, Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972, pp. 93-95 (with picture of the *stela* on p. 95); Kobishchanov (*Axum*, pp. 2, 37 and 122) has printed illustrations of several (other) Axum *stelae.*

17 The thesis of Kobishchanov (*Axum*, pp. 64-73 and 80-90) that there were two different Ezanas and that the Ezana inscriptions therefore are written by two different persons, cannot be accepted. A somehow similar view was expressed by F. Altheim & Ruth Stiehl, 'Die datierung des Königs Ezana von Aksum', *Klio* 39 (1961), pp. 234-248. See for a full discussion B. Hendrickx, 'Ezana, basileus d'Axoum: quelques considérations prosopographiques et chronologiques', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 79 (1997) (N.S. 8), pp. 124-134.

18 The new text reads 6,224 sheep.

19 The two texts are somewhat different. Hägg in Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes*, III, p. 1096 translates *hydreuma* as wells, and supposes they were *hafirs*, i.e. artificial ponds or lakes. This reference to water is reminiscent of Silko's reference to water (or rather the non-provision of water for his enemies) in line 21 of his inscription.

20 The attribution of 'subsidies' is reminiscent of the Roman policy vis-à-vis Beja and Noubades. Peace was thus often 'bought' by the Romans or Byzantines from the Beja and Nubians. A particular 'local' example is found in a Gebelein document of the Blemmyan *basiliskos* Charachen (6th Century?), which indicates or at least strongly suggests that peace existed in the Nile region (*in casu* at the island of Tanara [Temsir]), because - or as long as - the Romans paid

The Greek Christian inscription (ca. 350 AD)[22] of King Ezana does not mention 'peace' either. War was waged against the Noba, who had overcome the Mangiatho, Chasa, Triaditae and Bareotai, who must have been subjected vassal-groups of the Axumites from an earlier stage or at least friendly allies. The inscription nevertheless clearly illustrates that these peoples could indeed count on the protection of the Axumite king against their invaders, when or if they asked for it. As such, the *Pax Aethiopica* appears to have worked.

In his Christian Ge'ez inscription[23], Ezana explains in detail his war with the Noba, who had attacked the Mangurto, Khasa, Barya, the 'Blacks' and the 'Red peoples'. The Noba had been subjected, but broke three times their oaths and killed Ezana's messengers. The Noba were consequently defeated by Ezana with the usual consequences: the taking of prisoners, killing of refugees, capturing spoils; burning of brick houses as well as of reed houses; carrying off food, copper, iron and brass; destruction of statues and treasures, food and cotton trees; sinking of ships, crowded with women and men in the Takaze river. Ezana's men took away from the captured chieftains silver and a small case made of gold. The end of the inscription (lines 40-44) gives the following account of enemy casualties and of the spoils: 214 men and 415 women were captured; 602 men and 156 women and children were slain, 10,560 cattle and 51,050 sheep were taken as loot. All this is presented as a gift of God to Ezana. They also made up a significant part of the 'property' of the King[24].

In both Christian inscriptions Ezana appears as a ruler, who protects his allies and subjected peoples, but who also crushes revolts and harshly punishes his foes when they do not ask for peace or repeatedly break the peace. Thus, in all these cases, *Pax Aethiopica* appears to be a result of war and military action, but this only after (continuous) diplomatic efforts failed.

H.N. Chittick[25] has remarked that "when we read the texts of the inscriptions of Ezana and other Axumite rulers, we have the impression of a kingdom in a state of continuing enmity with the Meroitic region". He believes that in fact "for most of the time relations were peaceable, and indeed friendly", since Axum's prosperity relied on trade, an essential factor for Axum's prosperity. He thereby relies on the *Periplous* and Kosmas Indikopleustes, the latter stating that the

their customary duties, i.e. gratuities (*synetheia*). Cf. Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes*, III, no. 336, pp. 1209-10.

21 Kobishchanov (*Axum*, pp. 65-66) that this inscription shows that Ezana "was now so strong that he could change the traditional methods of 'pacification'", these latter methods being the personal command of a campaign by the King himself.

22 Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes*, III, no. 299, pp. 1100-1103.

23 DAE, IV, no. 11 - Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge, *A History of Ethiopia, Nubia & Abyssinia*, I-II, Methuen, 1928 (rep. Oosterhout, 1970), pp. 252-258.

24 For this particular aspect, see Kobishchanov, *Axum*, p. 159.

25 H.N. Chittick, 'Ethiopia and the Nile valley', *Meroitica* 6 (1982), p. 50.

Axumite King used to send every year agents to the Sasu country to bargain for gold. Other researchers have come to other conclusions. Thus Hägg e.g. believes that the inscription fragments of unknown Axumite Kings, mentioned above[26], show in reality a violent reaction from the part of the Meroites against their Axumite conquerors.[27] Török, in his commentary on the 'new' Greek pagan text of Ezana[28], discusses the military and confused context of the end of the Meroitic period and the related Axumite activities in detail.

Consequently there is no doubt that in peace as well as in wartime, 'diplomats' were used, and that the prosperity of Axum, which indeed relied on trade, cannot be envisaged without accompanying war and conquest.

1.3. The last 'group' of documents is the Roman-Byzantine one, supplemented by narrative sources from N.E. Africa, Arabia and the Near East.

Already in 29 BC, a long time before the period we discuss – the Roman Empire and the 'Ethiopians' came to an agreement regarding the organization of a buffer state between the two lands.[29]

During the late Roman period, the *limiton* security between Egypt and Nubia remained a problem. One of the *Prisci Panitae Fragmenta*[30] states that the defeated Blemmyes and Nobades sent ambassadors (πρεσβεία) to the Romans in 453 AD in order to conclude a peace treaty. After negotiations a truce (σπόνδαι, συνθήκαι) of 100 years was concluded. An inscription, now lost, reflecting the treaty, was erected in the temple at Philae (ἐγγραφέντων τῶν συνδοξάντων)[31].

Up to a point a certain spirit of collaboration for mutual advantage is found in the collaboration between Justin I and Kaleb (ca. 523 AD) against Dhu-Nuwas, the

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26 Hägg, 'A new Axumite inscription in Greek from Meroe', pp. 436-41.

27 See also Sellassie, *History*, pp. 89-144 and Kobishchanov, *Axum*, pp. 35-107.

28 In Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes*, III, pp. 1097-1100.

29 The famous trilingual inscription of Cornelius Gallus, *praefectus* of Alexandria, erected in that year in a building in front of the temple of Augustus in Philae refers to a Meroitic defeat and the ensuing peace with all the known ingredients: the revolted Thebaid was subjected again, Cornelius conducted his army over the Cataract, and at Philae he received the ambassadors of the 'Ethiopians' and the official friendship ("προξενία"; "rege in tutelam recepto") from the 'Ethiopian' ruler, and he installed a *tyrannos* in the Triakontaschoenes. While the Latin and Greek terms for 'peace' are not used, the text clearly confirms the 'client' status of the 'Ethiopian' ruler, the *tyrannos*, certainly himself an 'Ethiopian', being installed at the head of the buffer zone. See B. Hendrickx, 'Die drietalige inskripsie van Gallus (29 v.C.) te Philae as casus belli', *Akroterion* 36:1-2 (1991), pp. 55-61 (cf. *Acta Classica* 32 [1989], pp. 123-4). It is interesting that the term *tyrannos* is also used in the *testimonium* of the *Prisci Panitae Fragmenta*, where we read at the occasion of the erection of an inscription reflecting the treaty of 100 years (see following footnote): "τῶν τε τυραννησάντων καὶ ὑπὸ τυράννων γεγονότων".

30 C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicum Graecorum* (FHG), IV, no. 21, pp. 100-101.

31 Hendrickx, *Documents*, no. 13, pp. 64-66.

'Jewish' King of the Homeritae[32], as well as in the rather fictional[33] story of the *Kebra Negast*[34], where one reads that Emperor Justin I and Kaleb, ruler of Axum, divided the world at a conference in Jerusalem.

Later, Emperor Justinian negotiated with Kaleb an alliance against the Persians[35]. Thus, Justinian sent his ambassador Julianus (πρεσβευτής) with *sacrae* (*theiai keleuseis*)[36] to Kaleb and to Esimiphaeus, the new (Christian) King of the Homeritae, in order to become allies in the war against the Persians on the ground of their common religion[37], although there were also commercial

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32 For details see Hendrickx, *Documents*, no. 14, pp. 66-69; Sellassie, *History*, pp. 128-135; A. A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, Harvard: University Press, 1950, pp. 288 and 294. On the value of the *Acta Arethas*, especially with reference to this episode see V. Christides, 'The Martyrdom of Arethas and the Aftermath: History vs. Hagiography', *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 (1999-2000), p. 65; id., 'Hagiography in the Service of History: the Martyrdom of St. Athanasius of Klysma and the Spread of Christianity in Southern Egypt and Nubia', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 92 (NS 21) (2010), pp. 127-129 and id., "Once again the *Narrationes of Nilus Sinaiticus*", *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 93, (NS 22) (2011), pp. 2-3.

33 The story nevertheless reflects to a degree the political reality at the times of Justin I and Justinian. The first one had indeed initiated the alliance with Kaleb, which was certainly important for the Byzantine hegemony over the Asian lands, which surrounded the Byzantine provinces. Cf. Vasiliev, *Justin*, pp. 289-298 - Aikatherini Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινή Ιστορία, Α΄, 324-610*, Athens: Athanasopoulos, 1975, pp. 272ff. and 305ff.; A. G. Savvides and L.A. Deriziotis, *Ιστορία του Βυζαντίου*, Athens, 1996, pp. 121-123, 252-253.

34 *Kebra Nagast (The Glory of Kings)*, translation and commentary by Miguel F. Brooks, Lawrenceville, 1995, chap. 104.

35 Hendrickx, *Documents*, pp. 69-74, no. 15; Sellassie, *History*, pp. 137-140.

36 The use of *sacrae* (θείαι κελεύσεις) by Justin as well as by Kaleb is remarkable, because the term is used by the Byzantine chancellery for external rulers who were considered as *not* yet representing an organized state (cf. T. K. Loungis, 'Διπλώματα και διπλωματική: το παράδειγμα της Jussio', (1979), p. 82, www.byzsym.org/index.php/bz/article/viewFile/662/580, accessed 15 August 2012), and thus indicating Byzantine imperial superiority. Kaleb used himself also *sacrae*, an act which may symbolize equality with the Roman-Byzantines, although it is possible that he simply was copying Byzantine tradition and etiquette.
Sacrae are - *mutatis mutandis* - also testified in the archive of Flavius Abinnaeus, *praefectus alae* at Dionysias in Egypt (342-351 AD), where a petition (in Latin) from Abinnaeus to the Emperors Constantius and Constans is preserved: Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes*, III, pp.1083-1087. In this text, we read that Abinnaeus, who reported on his military mission with a group of federate Blemmyes in 337-8 AD to Emperors Constantius and Constans, at the same time asked that he be appointed – by *sacrae* – as a *tribunus* on the staff of the cavalry squadron at Dionysias. This proves that Roman imperial *sacrae* were not only used in Africa in the context of diplomatic relations with African tribes or states.

37 Procopios, *Ιστορία των Πολέμων*, ed. Periklis Rodakis, Athens: Nea Synora, 1996, I,XX,9; *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig: Teubner, 1883 (= Hildesheim, 1963), pp. 244-245; *Ioannis Zonarae Epitomae Historiarum Libri XVIII*, ed. M. Pinderi, Bonn: CSHB, 1897, p. 177; *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, ed. L. Dindorf, Bonn: CSHB, 1831, pp. 456-459. The different sources confuse the name of the Ethiopian ruler, who is called Hellestheaios, Arethas and Elesbaas (see discussion in Hendrickx, *Documents*, pp. 71-74).

reasons.[38] The *testimonia* of Procopios, Malalas, Theophanes, Photios and Zonaras[39] do not allow any doubt about these facts. Not peace, but *philia* is asked by the Romans from King Kaleb in their search for an alliance against the Persians.[40] A second envoy, Nonnosus, was also sent to Kaleb by Justinian.[41] Consequently, Kaleb and Justinian's envoy, Julian, concluded a formal treaty. The treaty was followed up by Kaleb, who sent in his turn *sacrae* and presents to Byzantium[42], and by another mission from Justinian, led by Nonnosus[43], to Kaleb.

2. *Diplomacy and immunity*

Some questions have to be asked about the diplomatic negotiating of peace, and about some sort of diplomatic immunity for the negotiators. In the same way, the techniques of coming to a peace agreement, to restore peace or to continue peaceful relations, as they are illustrated in the texts, must be analysed. Finally, one should also ask which was the framework of these negotiations, which were the powers given to envoys and negotiators, which were the possible guidelines or orders the latter received, and which were the accompanying circumstances and the official way in which peace was sealed, guaranteed, communicated to the people, propagandized and celebrated.

2.1. The Silko-Phonen documents give some clear answers to several of these questions. The use of diplomats is discussed and even analysed in Phonen's letter, where ambassadors from Abourni (line 7: πρεσβευτής, lines 26-27: πρεσβευτάς) and Phonen (line 14: πρεσβευτ[ὰς]) are mentioned as playing an important role. Phonen accuses Abourni of killing his ambassadors, who were high status persons

[38] *Theophanis Chronographia*, pp. 244-245. According to Procopios (I,XX, 9), Ethiopia could purchase silk from India and selling it directly to the Byzantines. Procopius complains in his *History of the Persian Wars* that the Ethiopians made some promises regarding the silk trade, which were not kept.

[39] Procopios, I, xx; *Malalae Chronographia*, pp. 457-459; *Theophanis Chronographia*, year 571/2; Photius, *Bibliothèque*, ed. René Henry, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1959, I, pp. 4-7; *Ioannis Zonarae Epitomae Historiarum Libri*, p. 177.

[40] *Theophanis Chronographia*, p. 244; cf. Hendrickx, *Documents,* p. 70.

[41] *Nonnosus*, FHG, IV, pp. 178-180; Photios, *Bibl.* I, pp. 4-7. For the controversy around this mission see Sellassie, *History*, pp. 139-140; Müller, FHG, IV, pp. 178-9; Vasiliev, *Justin*, pp. 394-398.

[42] Malalas, p. 459.

[43] Nonnosus's work, *Historia,* is lost. An abstract of it is given by Photios in his *Bibliotheca* (pp. 3-7). Nonnosus's grandfather was already sent as ambassador by Emperor Anastasios to Kaisos, while Nonnosus's father, Abrames, was sent to Alamoundaros, *phylarchos* of the Saracens (i.e. Arabs), by Justin, and to Kaisos by Justinian (Photius, 4). Müller (FHG, IV, 178-9) identified Nonnosus' mission with this of Julian, but the contexts of both missions differ and it thus seems that Nonnosus' embassy to Kaleb took place only *after* the restoration of Kaisos (Vasiliev, *Justin*, pp. 395-8; Sellassie, *History*, pp. 139-140).

of his court, namely Yeni[44], a *phylarchos* and a *hypotyrannos* (lines 14-18), while the accompanying priests (*prophetai*) were retained. Abourni's treachery was the more insolent in Phonen's eyes, because the latter's ambassadors were "μετὰ ὅρκους" (lines 15-16). Also, when Yeni was sent by Phonen to make peace (lines 14, 18), he was given oaths by the King (line 28). It is certain that we have to do with 'written oaths', which in a certain way were used as a sort of 'lettres de créance', indicating the purpose and scope of the mission. What makes Abourni's crime in the eyes of Phonen still more unjustifiable is the fact that it appears that the former had sent ambassadors to Phonen, who had respected them and sent them back together with his own negotiators (lines 7-10, 14-16, 26-28).[45]

At about the same time, ca. 450 AD, the Roman *tribunus* Viventius, commander of the border troops of southern Egypt, concluded peace with Tantani, *phylarchos* of the nation of the Anouba (Nouba), both by swearing oaths on their heads so that the peace would be 'mutual and worthy'.[46]

Oaths are also mentioned in Silko's inscription; he wrote that when he made peace with the Blemmyes, they gave oaths and he trusted them (lines 7-9). Both kings' documents also indicate that priests, religion and belief in the authority of the ancient gods were important in the framework of *guarantee*.[47]

2.2. Oaths are also testified in Ezana's inscriptions. As was the case with the Blemmyes in Silko's inscription, the Noba – in Ezana's Christian Ge'ez inscription – had given solemn oaths, which they 'twice and thrice had broken', while they had killed their neighbours and 'they had stripped bare and stolen the properties of our deputies and messengers which I [Ezana] had sent to them to enquire into their thefts, and had stolen from them their weapons of defence' (lines 11b-13a). Ezana then sent warnings which were ignored and this led to war (lines 13-14). The case is reminiscent of the Phonen one, since in both cases the immunity of ambassadors was disregarded and they suffered physical violence. In both cases too, the rulers (Phonen and Ezana) did nevertheless not act without due consideration of the circumstances and goals. They choose the path of warnings,

44 Yeni and 'his brothers', who often appear in the text, are certainly high status pesons near to Phonen and perhaps his relatives (Phonen calls him 'brother' [lines 27-28]). Török (in Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes,* III, p. 1164) considers him to be a *phylarchos.* It is, however, not clear in the text which title Yeni has, and whether the murdered *phylarchos* of line 15 refers to Yeni, mentioned in line 14, or whether the *phylarchos* of line 15 is some one else.

45 One can also note that while the negotiations' contents in Phonen's case relate to land, cattle and silver, there is allusion to returning 'stolen' or ceased property, and also to a camel, sent by Phonen as present to Abourni (line 32).

46 Coptic letter of Viventius to Tantani, in Eide, Hägg, Holton Pierce & Török (eds), *Fontes,* III, p. 1167, no. 320, lines 11-13.

47 A guarantee for further peace, resulting from forceful submission, can also be found in the capture of women and children (Silko, line 22). This seems to be the case when peoples did not subject themselves willingly or did not make supplication for peace (Silko, line 7).

which in Ezana's case led to nothing. It is remarkable that in the latter case, distinction is made between deputies and messengers, the former probably being Ezana's officials in order to make – as inspectors – inquiries about the situation, while the messengers – and warnings – had a more direct, diplomatic character. A detail is also the fact that they had arms, but were consequently disarmed by the rebels. Ezana's subsequent victories were finally celebrated by the erection of thrones (lines 39 and 44-52), while the erection of statues[48] had concluded the end of the wars of Ezana against the Bougaeitai (Beja) (trilingual inscription, lines 30-31: ἀνδριάντα χρυσοῦν [ἕν]α κ[αὶ] ἀργύρ[ε]ον ἕνα κ[αὶ] χαλκοῦς γ′ ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι.

2.3. Finally, it could be said arguably that the Christianization of Nubia and Axum by the Byzantines contributed to the extension of the *Oikoumene*, and thus to the related *Pax Byzantina*. When Justinian and Theodora actively undertook their missionary work by sending and appointing ambassadors and by directly or indirectly interfering in the work of the missionaries, it was certainly not only as a result of piety and Christian devotion, but as much, if not more, as a result of well calculated politics[49].

Conclusions

This article has led to the following conclusions:

a) The granting of *peace*, as an alternative of *war*, appears in the Nubian and Ethiopian texts as a privilege of the Kings or Emperors, who granded it to subjected nations and tribes in exchange for tribute and service.

b) Peace included absence of war, protection by the conqueror, support and eventual subsidies, concord, preservation of the population (i.e. safeguarding from slavery, death and destruction) and it is also used as synonym for *philia*.

c) Peace, even when accompanied by subjection or submission, did not exclude the co-existence of former and minor kings the Great-King, being their overlord.

d) The *mechanisms* used to obtain peace could be activated either in a preventive way (to avoid war), a corrective way, a punitive way or in order to promote a common cause.

48 Kobishchanov (*Axum*, p. 67) notes that probably these statues "were the gigantic bronze statues (with a height up to 5 meters), the base of one of which was discovered by the German Axum expedition."

49 Effrosyni Zacharopoulou, 'Ο ρόλος της βυζαντινής πολιτικής στον εκχριστιανισμό της Νουβίας', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 93 (NS 22) (2011), pp. 10-33 (the article is based on her unpublished Ph.D. thesis on Christianity in Nubia [University of Johannesburg, 2011]).

e) The agents used in these mechanisms were the 'diplomats' (envoys, ambassadors, deputies, messengers).

f) It was expected that these agents were granted some protection, be it in the form of diplomatic immunity or be it as a result of fear for the power of their lord or conqueror.

g) There was a remarkable Byzantine influence on the use of diplomatic relations. Thus the use of *sacrae* by the Axumites and the Homeritae (Christian Yemenites) is remarkable, giving in fact an extended dimension to its meaning.

h) Peace was announced to subjected groups as well to the conquering ones by means of inscriptions and monuments such as sculptures, thrones and engravings.[50]

[50] I wish to thank the *National Research Foundation* of South Africa for their financial support of my projects.

Lakhmids against Ghassanids in the late 6th c. CE

Qābūs b. al-Mundhir defeats al-Mundhir b. Ḥārith b. Jabala. A pre-Islamic episode rendered into Arabic from Syriac

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Introduction

The history of the Arab client groups is of great importance to understand the relations with Byzantium and Persia, but also for the history of the Arab tribes and their clans, which experienced various inter-Arab processes in contact with Byzantine and Persian Empires.[1]

Little is known about the relationship between Lakhmids[2] and Persians. However, despite their military and economic interests,[3] we do know that Byzantines did not have much confidence in Ghassanids and sometimes they expressed their disagreement and dissatisfaction with the military collaboration of the Arab groups, calling them traitors among other unpleasant expressions.[4]

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[1] Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century*, London - New York: Routledge, 1996 (rep. of 1985), p. 169. Cf. Robert G. Hoyland, 'Arab Kings, Arab tribes and the beginnings of Arab historical memory in late Roman epigraphy', in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. by H. Cotton, R. Hoyland, J. Price and D. Wasserstein, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 394-396.

[2] On Lakhmids and Ghassanids under Justin II, see Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995, pp. 307-393. On Lakhmids see also Gustav Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Laḫmiden in al-Ḥîra. Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard, 1899.

[3] Cf. Jean Sauvaget, 'Les Ghassanides et Sergiopolis', *Byzantion* 14 (1939), pp. 115-130, and Greg Fisher, 'The political development of the Ghassān between Rome and Iran', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (2008), pp. 311-334. For the area in which the Ghassanids were based, the Ḥawrān, see R. G. Hoyland, 'Late Roman Provincia Arabia, Monophisite Monks and Arab Tribes: a problem of centre and periphery', *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009), pp. 117-139.

[4] This called al-Mundhir b. al-Ḥārith (καταπροδότος, "treacherous") in *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with scholia*. Edited with introduction, critical notes, and indices by J. Bidez and L. Permentier, London: Methuen & Co., 1868, V 20 (pp. 215-216), an English translation of Evagrius' Greek text in: *The Ecclesiastical Ḥistory of Evagrius Scholasticus*. Translated with an introduction by Michael Whitby, (Translated Texts for Historians, 33), Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000, V 20 (p. 282). Cf. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, edition and translation by H. B. Dewing, 6 vols, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1914, II iv 21 (pp. 292-293). See also Fergus Millar, 'Rome's 'Arab' Allies in Late Antiquity', in *Commutatio et Contentio. Studies in the Late*

Byzantium explored new possibilities in the Arabic milieu and they approached to the Lakhmids, the adversaries of the Ghassanids.[5]

Conflict between Lakhmids and Ghassanids knew an interesting account of disagreements. After the death of al-Ḥārith,[6] probably in 569 or 570 CE, both tribes experienced a new episode when the new Lakhmid king[7] Qābūs (569-573 CE) invaded the territory of the Ghassanid king al-Mundhir (569-581 CE).[8] Qābūs was defeated and al-Mundhir moved the struggle to the Lakhmid lands where the Ghassanid seized Qābūs' properties and livestock. A further attack by Qābūs led to his final defeat at the hands of al-Mundhir.

Al-Mundhir informed Justin II,[9] but the emperor did not give him support and tried to assassinate him.[10] However, the Arab king knew the plans of the emperor, because it came into his hands the letter to Marcian, in which he was informed of murdering al-Mundhir.[11]

Roman, Sasanian, and Early Islamic Near East, ed. Henning Börm and Josef Wiesehöfer, Düsseldorf: Wellem Verlag, 2010, pp. 159-186. Cf. Stephen Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire AD 284-641*, Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2015, p. 436; Philip K. Hitti, *The Arabs: from the earliest tomes to the present*, Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1989 (10th ed.), p. 80.

5 Lawrence I. Conrad, 'The Arabs', in *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume XIV. Late Empire: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425-600*, ed. A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins and M. Whitby, Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 2000, p. 694.

6 On Ḥārith ibn Jabalah, cf. I. Shahîd, 'Procopius and Arethas. Part One', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 50 (1957), pp. 39-72; id., 'Procopius and Arethas. Part Two', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 50 (1957), pp. 362-382.

7 On the term king in the North Arabian context, see Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, 'A king amongst kings. On the term *mlk* in the context of the North Arabian Aramaic inscriptions', in *Archaism and Innovation in the Semitic Languages. Selected Papers*, ed. J. P. Monferrer-Sala & Wilfred G. E. Watson (Semitica Antiqva, 1), Córdoba: Oriens Academic, 2013, pp. 93-112.

8 On al-Mundhir b. al-Ḥārith b. Jabala, see I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, pp. 860-865 *et seq*. For al-Mundhir's reign, see the synthesis by Michele Piccirillo, *L'Arabia Cristiana: dalla Provincia imperiale al primo periodo islamico*, Milano: Jaca Book, 2002, pp. 205-208.

9 On the reign of Justin II (565-578 CE), see I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, pp. 307-346. About his politico-religious activity, see Theresia Hainthaler, 'The end of the Justinian era', in Aloys Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian tradition. Vol. 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604). Part two: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century*. Translated by P. Allen and J. Cawte, London - Louisville, Kentucky: Cassell Imprint - Westminster John Knox Press, 1995, pp. 481-502

10 About this affair, cf. Garth Fowden and Elizabeth Key Fowden, *Studies in Hellenism, Christianity and the Umayyads* (Meletēmata, 37), Athens: Research Center for Greek and Roman Antiquity – National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2004, p. 50 (cf. id., *Quṣayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*, [The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, XXXVI], Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2004, p. 130).

11 About this conflict, see I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, pp. 340-346. See also Jawād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī ta'rīkh al-'arab qabla l-Islām*, 11 vols, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, *s.d.*, III, pp. 324-325.

Because of this, al-Mundhir withdrew his support for the Roman garrisons during a period of three years and the Roman provinces of Syria and Euphratesia underwent a serious weakening.[12] Thus, the reign of al-Mundhir is a crucial period to understand the relationships between Ghassādids and Romans during the decade 569-578.[13]

This pre-Islamic account on the struggles between Lakhmid Qābūs and Ghassanid al-Mundhir has been preserved in an Arabic-*Karshūnī* translation of the Syriac text of the Chronicle of Michael the Great († 1199).[14] The Arabic translation has survived in five copies of which the earliest is *Ms. Or. 4402* held in the British Museum.[15] The manuscript in question, comprising 422 folios, was copied in 1846,[16] and is entitled *Tawārīkh al-zamān* ('Histories of time'). The translation of the Chronicle was made by the Syrian Orthodox metropolitan (*muṭrān*) of Damascus Ḥannā al-Ṣadadī ibn 'Īsā († 1759),[17] as stated in the colophon.[18]

12 Wolf Liebeschuetz, 'The defences of Syria in the sixth century', in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms 2. Vorträge des 10. internationalen Limeskongresses in der Germania inferior, Xanten, 1974* (Bonner Jahrbücher, 38), Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1977, pp. 494-499; Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford Historical Monographs), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 210-211.

13 I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, p. 861, cf. pp. 373-384. Cf. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and his People*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 118.

14 *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, éditée pour la premier fois et traduit en français par Jean-Baptiste Chabot, 4 vols, Paris: E. Leroux, 1899, 1901, 1905, 1910. On this author and his work, see Dorothea Weltecke, 'Les trois grandes chroniques syro-orthodoxes du XII^e^ et XIII^e^ siècles', in *L'historiographie syriaque*, ed. Muriel Debié (Études syriaques, 6), Paris: Geuthner, 2009, pp. 111-118 and Jan van Ginkel, 'A man is not an island. Reflections of the historiography of the early Syriac Renaissance in Michael the Great', in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman Teule et al., Louvain: Peeters, 2010, pp. 113-121.

15 Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (Studi e Testi, 133), Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947, vol. II, 267 (= GCAL). Cf. Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Wevers, 1922, rep. Berlin 1968), p. 30 §48b. For a description of this MS, see G. Margoliouth, *Descriptive List of Syriac and Karshuni Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since 1873*, London: Longmans and Co., 1899, p. 32.

16 Ms. Brit. Mus. Or. 4402, fol. 420[r], lines 9-10.

17 Graf wrongly gives aṣ-Ṣasadī, cf. G. Graf, GCAL, II, 267, IV, 31. Cf. Ignatios Aphrem I. Barṣaum, *Geschichte der syrischen Wissenschaften un Literatur*. Translated from Arabic by Georg Toro and Amil Gorgis, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012, p. 352.

18 Ms. Brit. Mus. Or. 4402, fol. 420[r], lines 3-6.

Edition and translation[19]

/205bª/ ܐܪܣܠ ܡ̄ ܡܘܪܝܣ ܡܠܐ ܡܢ ܪܘܡ ܗܘ ܗܢܐ ܡ̄ ܩܘܣܛܢܛܝܢ ܒܝܢ ܐܠܪܘܡ ܘܐܠܦܪܣ ܟܠܗ ܙܡܢܐ ܠܠܘܩܘܗ. ܗܘ ܗܢܐ ܡ̄ ܩܘܣܛܢܛܝܢ ܙܥܡ ܐܢܗ ܐܒܢܗ ܡܚܡܕ ܡܥܗ. ܘܐܪܣܠܗ ܡܥ ܒܥܣܪ ܐܠܪܘܡ ܟܠܗ ܢܨܝܒܝܢ. ܘܟܠܡܐ ܘܨܠ ܐܠܝ ܕܐܪܗ. ܐܪܣܠ ܡܢ ܒܥܣܪܗ ܐܠܐܪܙ ܐܠܦܪܣ. ܦܟܬܒܐ ܘܟܬܒܐ ܟܬܝܪܐ ܘܙܝܢܐ ܒܕܐܪܗ. ܘܟܠܡܐ ܢܙܘܐ ܐܠܦܪܣ ܐܠܪܘܡ ܦܐܫܐ ܟܬܝܪ ܘܐܣܬܠܡ ܐܠܡܐܠܟ ܐܠܥܪܒ ܦܝ ܢܨܝܒܝܢ ܘܒܪܝ ܠܡܚܡܕ ܐܠܐܠܗܘܡ ܘܐܬܒܪܗ ܐܪܒܥܗ ܐܠܦ ܐܠܘܩܐ ܕܐܐܦܝܢ ܐܠܡܠܟ. ܘܗܘܐ ܙܒܢܗ ܐܠܦܪܣ ܣܠܡ ܐܒܠܟܢܐ ܡܠܟܘܡ. ܘܐܒܠܟܢܐ ܘܕܪܗ ܒܢܨܝܒܝܢ. ܘܦܝܟܢܐ ܐܠܟܐܠܐܡ ܐܠܥܪܒ ܡܥܛܠܟܐ ܡܥܬܩܕ ܙܪܥ ܗܘܡܘ. ܘܐܠܙܘܐ ܐܠܡܣܝܚܝܝܢ ܐܠܥܪܒ ܘܐܟܠ ܐܠܡܪܒܝܗ. ܠܡ ܝ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܟܐܢ ܠܡܚܡܕ ܝ ܥܠܝܗ ܒܟܠ ܢܨܝܒܝܢ ܒܝܢܗ ܐܠܐܒܢ. ܦܪܝܩ ܡܚܡܕ ܒܝܢ ܐܠܡܣܠܡܝܢ ܦܝ ܘܐܪܗ ܘܥܠܝܗ ܒܟܠ ܢܨܝܒܝܢ ܦܝ ܢܪܩ ܢܚܠܝ. ܘܐܣܬܐܬܘܐ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܒܐܠܒ. ܘܙܒܢܐ ܐܢܗܡ ܒܢ ܡܟܠܟܐ ܡܥܬܩܕܐ. ܘܒܐܒܐ ܡܥܝܢ ܒܐܠܡܐܠܟ ܟܬܝܪ. /205bᵇ/ ܠܡ ܝܙܠ ܐܥܩܘܒ ܡܢ ܒܝܢ ܝܗܘܕܝ. ܘܒܠ ܙܝܕܐ ܘܐܝܟܐ ܒܝܬܗ ܒܙܥܡܗ. ܒܟܬܒ ܢܒܝܟ ܡܚܡܕ. ܦܐܙ ܒܟܠܡ ܡܚܡܕ. ܝ ܗܘܐ ܐܠܙܠܟ ܐܠܐܠܡ ܐܠܐ ܓܡܝܥ ܩܒܪ ܐܠܐܣܠܐܡܝܗ. ܦܩܐܠܟ ܒܗ ܐܠܐܢ ܒܟܢܝܐ. ܗܘܐ ܐܢܙܠ ܐܢ ܝܩܘܙ ܒܢܝܐ ܐܠܟܠܐ ܘ ܡܥܝܢܗܘܠܐ ܘܐܒܪܗܝܡ ܒܐܠܟܢܗ. ܘܐܠܥܪܒܝܗ ܒܙܥܡܗ ܒܙܥܡ. ܘܟܢ ܡܚܡܕ ܠܐܘܦܝ ܒܒܝܠ ܒܢܒܥܘ ܐܠܠܗ. ܐܪܒ ܢܘܥܢ ܣܠܡ ܢܐܒܪܐ. ܘܗܘܐ ܐܢܐ ܩܐܝܡ ܦܟܢܝܢ ܒܡܪܗܘܡ ܐܠܥܠܡ. ܐܢܐ ܗܘ ܒܐܠܟܘܝܠ ܐܡܪܐ ܘܒܐܠܟܢܝܣ. ܘܡܪܝܕ ܒܒܟܬܗ ܐܠܐܠܗܝ ܐܘ ܝܒܪܟܗ ܒܟܐ ܗܘܐ. ܘܡܠܟ ܡܢܝܗܐܬܗ. ܦܟܠܡܐ ܢܙܘܐ ܐܠܟܗܢܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܢ ܪܐܙ ܒܐܠܟܪܟܡ ܐܦܐܠܢܐ ܘܒܕܐ ܝܘܪܟܘܢ ܒܟܠܟ ܒܐܢܒ. ܠܐ ܡܢ ܝܢܣ ܒܝܢ ܙܢܣ ܐܠܝܗܘܕ ܘܙܝܢܐ ܝ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܡܠܐܐ. ܐܡܠ ܐܠܥܪܒ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܐܠܝܗ ܒܙܢ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܒܟܠ ܡܚܡܕ ܦܝ ܘܡܐܬܐ ܡܠ ܒܙܦܗ ܐܣܪܐ ܐܒܙܐ ܙܪܥܐ ܘܐܢܒܙܩܬܗ ܒܕܐ. ܡܥܕܘܕ ܡܠܟܘ ܐܠܒܢܝ ܒܟܡܠ ܡܠܐ ܣܐܪܐ ܐܒܥܘ. ܐܐܬܐ ܒܢܝ ܐܠܦܪܣ ܢܚܠܐ ܦܝ ܣܢܐܠ. ܘܒܐܒܐ ܦܝ ܕܟܘ ܐܠܐܡܠܝ ܦܙܡܟܝ ܐܠܒܢܝ. ܐܢ ܐܠܥܪܒܝ ܡܢܗܘܡ ܒܢܝ ܡܥܢܣ̄. ܘܡܢܗܘܡ ܒܢܝ ܦܪܣ. ܘܟܠܡܐ ܝ ܒܢܝ ܐܠܦܪܣ. ܘܟܐܢ ܐܠܐܙܪ ܒܢܝ ܐܠܡܣܝܚܝܝܢ. ܐܒܕܐ ܟܠ ܝܢܗܘܡ ܘܝܟܘܢܘܡ ܘ ܝܥܠܟܘܡ ܦܝܡܢ ܝܡܢ ܠܟܡܕܢܗ. ܘܣܠܟ ܒܟܝܢܘܡ ܘܡܐܠܟܘܡ ܘܡܠܟܠܟ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܡܢܗܘܡ. ܘܝܟܠܟ ܡܒܙ ܦܝ ܐܠܐܘܡ ܘܣܠܟ ܦܝ ܐܘܙ ܡܚܡܕ ܦܢܙܘܐ ܐܠܓܒܐܠ ܐܠܥܪܒܝܗ ܘܣܠܡ. ܦܙܝܢܐ ܐܢܗ ܡܚܡܕ ܡܟܠܘܡ. ܦܟܠܡܐ ܘܟܠܐ ܡܚܡܕ ܡܒܙ ܘܡܐܠܟܘܡ ܘܝܢܘܒ ܡܐܠܟܘܡ. ܘܡܢ ܡܪܗ ܙܝ ܡܒܙ ܝܣܠܡ ܐܠܟܠܐܠܟ ܘܐܠܝܟܠܐܠܟ. ܐܠܐ ܡܚܡܕ ܐܠܢܒܝ ܡܢ ܡܒܙ ܘܐܢܒܥܙ. ܠܡ ܡܙܝ ܒܟܢܝ ܐܠܦܪܣ ܠܝܢܒ ܒܟܐܬܒ. ܦܐܟܠܡ ܡܒܙ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܒܟܘܐ. ܘܝܟܒ ܝܘܒ ܠܢܟܝ ܐܠܟܠܐܬܒ: ܒܟܠܐ ܡܐܬܐ ܐܠܦܪܣ ܦܐܡܠ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܐܦܠܬܒ ܒܟܠܐܠ ܡܒܝܘܟ ܝ /206aª/ ܝܡܠܟ ܡܒܙ ܠܟܘܢܗ ܝܟܒ ܡܢܗ ܝܘܟܐ. ܘܟܠܒ ܗܘ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܙܡܐܠܟܡ. ܘܐܣܒܗ ܠܡܒܙ ܘܟܠ ܒܟܐ ܗܘܒܐ. ܐܢܢܐ ܐܒܟܠܢܝܢ ܠܡܚܡܕ ܝ ܝܡܩܕܡ ܡܢܟܘ ܠܐܝܠܟ ܐܡܘܙܐ ܙܙܘܙܝܗ ܠܐ ܝܟܘܢ ܝ ܝܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܒܐܠܙܡܐܠܟܗ. ܦܐܘܐ ܦܝ ܣܠܟ ܡܠ ܠܐܡܪ ܙܡܐܠܟܐܠܐ ܗܘܝܗ ܐܡܪܝ ܐܠܟ ܒܝܢܗ ܐܠܟܢܒ ܐܠܐܒܐܠܟ ܒܟܠ ܢܨܝܒܝܢ. ܘܐܠܐܡܪ ܡܟܠܐܬ ܒܟܐ ܠܡܚܡܕ ܗܘܒܐ. ܐܢܢܐ ܡܢ ܟܠܐܒܝܠ ܠܡܒܙ ܝ ܡܐܠܐ ܐܠܟܡ ܐܢܙܘ ܦܝ ܐܠܟܘܡܬ ܐܠܥܪܒ ܡܝܠܟ ܐܠܟܡ ܒܢ ܙܐܗܘ ܘܐܟܠܒ ܒܟܠ. ܘܟܠܡܐ ܝ ܙܐܘܐ ܗܘܝܗ ܐܠܡܣܝܚܝܗ ܐܠܐܠܡܥܗ. ܐܡܠ ܒܕܐܘܡܝܬ ܐܠܟܗܘܗ. ܐܡ ܒܟܟܐܠܟ ܐܡܪ ܡܠ. ܐܘ ܒܐܠܟܡܥܐܠܣ ܐܠܐܟܗܝ ܐܟܠܟ ܐܠܦܟܠܟ. ܘܟܠܒ ܒܟܠ ܙܡܐܠܟܐ ܡܚܡܕ ܐܝܡ ܡܒܙ ܘܡܒܟܠ ܙܡܐܠܟܐ ܡܒܙ ܐܝܡ ܡܚܡܕ. ܠܡ ܡܟܠܟ ܐܠܐܡܪ ܐܠܙܗܘܠܟ ܘܟܢܝ. ܘܡܟܢܝ ܐܘܠܐ ܐܠܟ ܡܒܙ ܦܟܠܐܝ ܐܠܙܡܐܠܟܗ ܘܡܙܐܐܠ. ܒܝܢ ܕܟܘ ܐܘܠܝ ܘܡܠܟ. ܒܟܘܙ ܠܐܟܝ ܒܟܠ ܐܘܙ ܐܠܪܘܡ. ܐܠܟܐܢ ܐܟܒ ܐܠܙܐܘܗ. ܠܡ ܐܡܠܟܐ ܒܙܟܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܝ ܠܐ ܝܡܟܘܢ ܒܟܐܬܒ ܐܠܪܘܡ ܠܟܡܕܢܗ ܐܠܟܠܡܗ. ܦܟܠܡܐ ܡܥܕܘܐ ܕܟܘ ܒܢܝ ܐܠܦܪܣ ܘܡܟܠܡܗܘܐ ܟܠ ܡܠ ܒܟܢܘܡ ܒܗܦ ܡܢ ܡܒܙ. ܘܟܠܐ ܒܟܠܐܙ ܐܠܪܘܡ ܘܡܠܟܐ ܘܡܙܗܘܐ ܣܠܡ ܠܐܝܠܐܬܗ ܘܟܒܟܘ ܒܙܢܝ ܐܠܡܠܟ ܒܟܠ ܡܚܡܕ ܠܙܝܢܗ ܐܢܗ ܗܘ ܐܟܠܟܡ ܠܡܒܙ. ܘܟܠܡܐ ܐܡܗܟ ـ ܡܚܡܕ ܘܐܪܣܠ ܠܒܐܙܐ. ܘܡܙܙ

[19] The present edition gathers all the paleographic peculiarities exhibited by the Karshūnī text. For the Armenian version, cf. P. Ischôk, *Chronique de Michel le Grand arménienne*, translated by Victor Langloise, Venice: Typographie de l'Académie de Saint-Lazare, 1868, pp. 205-207.

ܠܛܝ̈ܝܐ: ܠܐ ܒܫܡܗܘܢ ܡܬܝܕܥܝܢ. ܙܒܢܐ ܐܝܬ ܗܘܐ ܡܢ ܐܡܬܝ ܠܛܝ̈ܝܐ ܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ ܒܠܚܘܕܝܗܘܢ[20] ܗܘܘ ܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ. ܘܡܢ ܟܪܝܗܘܐ
ܠܛܝ̈ܝܐ ܡܢ ܚܝܪܬܐ ܘܗܘܘ ܡܬܩܪܝܢ ܠܚܝܪܬܝܐ. ܘܐܝܟܢܐ ܒܥܠܡܐ ܗܘܐ ܐܠܐܚܕܐ ܠܡܫܝܚܝܐ ܟܠܗ̇ ◆ ◆

/205b[a]/ Chapter eight, which gives an account of what happened in the eighth year of Justin between the Romans and the Persians. On the chief of the priests. In the eighth year of his reign, Justin made his sister's son Marcian a Caesar, and sent him out with the Roman army against Nisibis. When he reached Dārah he sent his army into the territory of the Persians. They lay waste (to it), took many captives and returned to Dārah. When the Persians saw the Romans they were greatly afraid. The prefect who was in Nisibis resorted to cunning and went out (to meet) Marcian at the border,[21] and kept him four months there because of his messengers. The Persians did this until they could inform their king and bring provisions into Nisibis. They cut off the gardens that surround it by the space of a bowshot, and expelled the Christians who were inside the city. Then the king wrote to Marcian that he should come down into Nisibis without delay. Marcian, having celebrated Easter in Dārah, went down into Nisibis in the middle of (the month of) *Nīsān*. On all sides they thought that they (the Romans) would soon capture it; for they were famed in battle. /205b[b]/ Then Acacius, a choleric man of great fierceness, arrived from Justin to remove Marcian from power. Marcian, knowing that this wicked man came with no intention of acting righteously, said to him: "Let us have time for you to see how many stockades, engines[22] and high towers we have. The city is in great trouble, and will soon be placed in our hands by God's grace. Wait two days until we have taken it, and here I shall be, in your presence, that the emperor's order may be carried out". But he, angered and wrathful, set his hands on him and, pulling him from side to side, cut his girdle from him. The soldiers, seeing what was happening to the brave man, rebelled and started to flee in all directions, for the army leader's standard had been thrown down. They believed that the emperor was dead. No-one at the time knew the cause of the emperor's anger against Marcian. Finally, it became clear and was thus known. Al-Mundhir had been made king of the Arabs on the death of Ḥārith, his father.[23] The Persian Arabs came to settle at Ḥirtā.[24] In those days, there were two groups of Arabs, that is of *ṭayyayē*: some were Christian Arabs and the others were Persian Arabs. When the Persian Arabs entered the land of the Christian Arabs, they seized all their cattle, their beasts of burden and their camels. Al-Mundhir called his troops to him, fell on them and slaughtered them. A few of them were saved. Al-Mundhir tracked them, and set up camp in the land of Qābūs. (The groups of Qābūs) seeing the tents set up there thought it was their king Qābūs. When al-Mundhir seized them, he slaughtered them and plundered their wealth. After some time, al-Mundhir returned with his booty of riches and camels.

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20 The *mem* of the suffixed pronoun has been written in *strangelā*.

21 Pl. *tuḥūm*, "borders".

22 ܡܝܟܢܝܩܘܢ = منجنيقا is a *lectio mendosa* of ܡܚܢܝܩܐ = μηχανήματα.

23 His father al-Ḥārith b. Jabala died in 569 or 570 CE. Cf. I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, pp. 860, 862.

24 On 6th century Arab policy in al-Ḥīra: 'Ḥīra und seine arabische Politik', in Franz Altheim and Ruth Stiehl, *Die Araber in der Alten Welt*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968, V:1, pp. 358-373.

Qābūs came to fight al-Mundhir, but was defeated. He then went back among the Persians to return the troops. Al-Mundhir informed the emperor of this, and requested gold in order to give it to the troops, so that they might not go back among the Persians. The emperor conceived a wicked idea to /206a[a]/ assassinate al-Mundhir, because he had asked for gold. Emperor Justin wrote two letters: one to al-Mundhir, in which (he wrote) as follows: "We have told Marcian to speak with you of necessary matters which it is unwise to set down in writing in this letter. So immediately (after) reading our letter, you must go with him to the army, encamped at Nisibis". The other, for Marcian, was written as follows: "We have written to al-Mundhir, so that he should come to you. Be ready the instant he arrives, to behead him and write to us". When this evil scheme was perpetrated, in error or by some ruse or divine heavenly (order), the action was switched: the name of al-Mundhir was written on the letter for Marcian, and that of Marcian on the letter for al-Mundhir. The messenger[25] received the order and set out. He went first to al-Mundhir, (who) opened the letter and read it. Then he shuddered and said: "in return for my efforts for the land of the Romans, I am rewarded by being beheaded". He was filled with rage, and ordered that, finally, the Roman soldiers should not join his army.[26] When the Persian Arabs heard this, they understood that they had nothing to fear from al-Mundhir. They entered the land of the Romans, destroying and burning (their crops) as far as Antioch. For this, the emperor waxed wrathful against Marcian, for he thought that he had informed al-Mundhir. Marcian was taken captive and sent to Dārah. The soldiers, seeing that his tent had been destroyed, thought that he had fled before the Persians and, abandoning their tents, took flight. The Persians left Nisibis and sacked the Roman garrison, whose soldiers thus suffered the worst of shame.

Philological analysis

The Arabic language used in the text seeks to attain the rules of classical Arabic, although with interferences from the register known as "Middle Arabic",[27] which exhibits some phonetic peculiarities of the Neo-Arabic, common to Christians, Jews and Muslims,[28] together with the influence of Aramaic dialects at the lexical and syntactic levels.[29]

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25 رسول = μαγιστριανός

26 After al-Mundhir discovered Justin's conspiracy against him he withdrew military support for the Roman army for three years, cf. I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, p. 868.

27 On 'Middle Arabic', register see Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic. Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millenium*, 3 vols, Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1966-67. Cf. Id., *The Emergence and linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic: A Study of the origins of Middle Arabic*, Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 1981.

28 Kees Versteegh, *Pidginization and Creolization: The Case of Arabic*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1984, pp. 8-9.

29 Cf. J. Blau, 'The influence of living Aramaic on Ancient South Pal estinian Christian Arabic', in *Arameans, Aramaic and the Aramaic Literary Tradition*, ed. Michael Sokoloff, Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983, pp. 141-142; Sidney H. Griffith, 'From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages

1. Writing[30]

The writing system used in the manuscript is *serṭō* type.[31] Some features exhibited in the fragment should be mentioned: the term الروم < ܐܠܪܘܡ (205b[a], 206a[a]) exhibits a small cross (+) over the *mem*, except in the first attestation of the gentilic (205b[a]). The theophoric ܐܠܠܗ (205b[b]; cf. الله < ܐܠܗ with *scriptio defectiva* in 206a[a]) represents the Christian Arabic realisation اللّه , not the Muslim ﷲ. When a vowel is realised the copyist uses the vowel Arabic system, e.g. عسكرة < ܥܣܟܪܗ (205b[a]).

2. Vocalism[32]

The text reflects a systematic absence of brief vowels, except in the following cases: اختة < ܐܚܬܗ (205b[a]), ارسلة < ܐܪܣܠܗ(205b[a]), عسكرة < ܥܣܟܪܗ(205b[a], 205b[b]), لة < ܠܗ

of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), pp. 16-24.

30 For the karshūnī system, see Julius Assfalg, 'Arabische Handschriften in syrischer Schrift (Karšūnī)', in *Grundriß der Arabischen Philologie. I. Sprachwissenschaft*, ed. Wolfdietrich Fischer, Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1982, pp. 297-302; Samir Khalil Samir, 'La tradition arabe chrétienne. Etat de la question, probléme et besoins', in *Actes du Premier Congrès International d'Études Arabes Chrétiennes (Goslar, september 1980)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir, Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1982, pp. 42-46. See also H. Bobzin, 'Über eine bisher unbekannte Europäische Bezeichnung des Terminus 'Karšūnī'', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 36:2 (1991), pp. 259-261; A. Mengozzi, 'The History of Garshuni as a Writing System: Evidence from the Rabbula Codex', in *CAMSEMUD 2007. Proceedings of the 13th Italian Meeting of Afro-Asiatic Linguistics, Held in Udine, May 21st-24th, 2007*, ed. Frederick Mario Fales and Giulia Francesca Grassi, Padua: S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice e Libreria, 2010, pp. 297-304; Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, 'Languages under a new skin. Arabic in Syriac writing, or the importance of the *karshūnī* texts for an overpowered culture', in *Languages and texts: Translation in Cross-Cultural Environments*, ed. Mª L. Rodríguez and Azahara Veroz, forthcoming.

31 Cf. W.H.P. Hatch, *An album of dated Syriac manuscripts*, Boston, MA: The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1946, pp. 27-29, 46-47.

32 J. Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic. Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millenium*. 3 vols, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1966-67, I, pp. 61-83 §§ 3-10 (henceforth GCA); J. Cantineau, *Études de linguistic arabe. Mémorial Jean* Cantineau (Paris, 1960), pp. 89-116; S. Hopkins, *Studies in the Grammar of Early Arabic. Based upon papyri datable to before A.H. 300/A.D. 912*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 1-18 §§ 1-16; B. Knutsson, *Studies in the Text and Language of three Syriac-Arabic Versions of the Book of Judicum with Special Reference to the Middle Arabic Elements*. Introduction-Linguistic Notes-Texts by B. Knutsson, Leiden: Brill, 1974, pp. 52-9; F. Corriente, *A grammatical sketch of the Spanish Arabic dialect bundle*, Madrid: IHAC, 1977, pp. 22-31 § 1.1.1-1.4.6; C. Brockelmann, *Grundriß der vergleichende Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1908, pp. 44-116 §§ 36-43; W. Wright, *Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*. Edited with a Preface and Additional Notes by W.R. Smith, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1890 (rep. Piscataway NJ, 2002), pp. 75-94.

(205b[b]), منطقتهُ < ܡܢܛܩܬܗ (205b[b]), طُرح < ܛܪܚ (205b[b]), لاجلهُ < ܠܐܓܠܗ (205b[b]), عرفةُ < ܥܪܦܗ (205b[b]), احداً < ܐܚܕܐ (205b[b]), أخيراً < ܐܚܝܪܐ (205b[b]), ظَنّوا < ܙܢܘܐ (205b[b]), انهُ < ܐܢܗ (205b[b], 206a[a]), لكونهُ < ܠܟܘܢܗ(206a[a]), منهُ < ܡܢܗ (206a[a]), هُو < ܗܘ (206a[a]), سهوُ < ܣܗܘ (206a[a]), ظنهُ < ܙܢܗ (206a[a]). As for the long volwels, the two dots of the *yā'* are marked in طأيين < ܛܐܝܝܢ (205b[b]) and عرب المسيحيين < ܥܪܒ ܠܡܣܝܚܝܝܢ (205b[b]).

Except in one case (بضيق < ܒܨܝܩ, 205b[b]), the use of the *tanwīn*[33] is always in the accusative case: كثيراً < ܟܬܝܪܐ (205b[a]), جدًّا < ܓܕܐ (205b[a]), هائجاً < ܗܐܝܓܐ (205b[b]), ابراجاً < ܐܒܪܐܓܐ (205b[b]), أيضًا < ܐܝܙܐ (205b[b]), ذهباً < ܕܗܒܐ (206a[a]), أموراً < ܐܡܘܪܐ (206a[a]), إذاً < ܐܕܐ (206a[a]).

As for the use of the *alif maqṣūrah*[34] the morphoponological shift /ay/ < /ē/ < /ā/ is perceptible, for instance, in the prepositions ܥܠܝ < علي < على (205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]), ܐܠܝ < الي < الى (205b[a], 206a[a]), ܚܬܝ < حتي < حتّى (205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]).

3. Suprasegmentals

Alif madda and *alif waṣla* are ommited. The *tashdīd*[35] is absent throughout the text, except in the following three instances: اخَّذهُ < ܐܚܕܗ (205b[a]), ظَنّوا < ܙܢܘܐ (205b[b]), يتكَّلم < ܝܬܟܠܡ (206a[a]).

4. Consonantism[36]

4.1. *Hamzah*[37]

In contrast to Classical Arabic, in which the phoneme /'/ is stable in all positions, in Neo-Arabic it is only realised in the initial position, even though in this

33 Blau, GCA, pp. 89-92 §§ 11.3.6.1-11.3.7; Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 22-25 § 21; B. Levin, *Die griechisch-arabische Evangelien-Übersetzung. Vat Borg. Ar. 95 und Ber orient. Oct. 1108*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri-a, 1938, p. 20.

34 Blau, GCA, pp. 81-83 §§ 10.1-10.3; Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 14-16 § 12; Bengtsson, *Two Arabic Versions*, p. 104 § 3.2.3; Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 58-59.

35 Blau, GCA, pp. 122-125 §§ 26.1-26.3.2; Hopkins, *Studies*, p. 49 § 48; Corriente, *Sketch*, pp. 66-67 § 3.2.1-3.2.2.

36 Blau, GCA, pp. 83-121 §§ 11-24.4; Cantineau, *Études de linguistique arabe*, pp. 13-88; Bengtsson, *Two Arabic Versions*, pp. 108-128 §§ 3.2.5-3.2.16; Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 59-112; Corriente, *Sketch*, pp. 31-60 §§ 2.1.1-2.28.7; Corriente, *Gramática comparada*, pp. 15-23; Wright, *Comparative Grammar*, pp. 42-74.

37 Blau, GCA, pp. 83-89 §§ 11-11.3.6.1; Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 19-33 §§ 19-28; Bengtsson, *Two Arabic Versions*, pp. 108-114 §§ 3.2.5-3.2.5.3; Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 59-78; Corriente, *Sketch*, pp. 58-60 §§ 2.28.1-2.28.7.

position it lost its independent phonemic function early on.[38] This fact is borne out by the representation of the /'/ as *alif* in the initial (e.g. أتى < ܐܬܐ, 205b[b]), medial (e.g. هائجاً < ܗܐܓܐ, 205b[b]), final position (e.g. رؤساء < ܪܘܣܐ, 205b[b]), and by /w/ or /y/ in the medial position, or its absence in any position. In this text, the *hamzah* is omitted in any position since it is not marked as in Judaeo-Arabic (e.g. אׂ): initial *hamzah*, followed by *sukūn*, intervocal and final, which reveals that the articulatory break /'/ is not perceptible in the register used by the scribe, reflecting the vernacular pronunciation of this consonant.

5. Consonantal relationship

One of the most significant issues of the relationship between the Syriac and Arabic alphabets is the consonantal equivalence.[39] In the present fragment the text exhibits the following correspondences between the two writing systems:

ܬ	=	ت	/t/	*passim*
ܬ	=	ث	/th/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܨ	=	ص	/ṣ/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܨ̇	=	ض	/ḍ/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܨ̇	=	ظ	/ẓ/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܓ	=	ج	/j/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܓ̇	=	غ	/gh/	205b[b]
ܕ	=	د	/d/	*passim*
ܕ	=	ذ	/dh/[40]	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]

38 Blau, 'Das frühe Neuarabisch in mittelarabischen Texten,' in *Grundriß der Arabischen Philologie. I. Sprachwissenschaft*, ed. W. Fischer – H. Gätje, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1982, pp. 100-101; Blau, GCA, pp. 83-84 §§ 11-11.1.

39 Cf. L. Costaz, *Grammaire syriaque*, Beirut: Dar elMachreq, [4]1997, p. 2 §3, n. 1. Cf. E. Kallas, 'Le type linguistique garchouni du Mont-Liban (XV[ème] s.) d'après les mss Vat. ar. 640 et Borg. Ar. 136 d'Ibn al-Qilāʿī', in *Moyen arabe et varieties mixtes de l'arabe à travers l'histoire. Actes du Premier Colloque International (Louvain-la-Neuve, 10-14 mai 2004)*, ed. J. Lentin et J. Grand'Henry (Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 58), Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 2008, pp. 256-257. On Ibn al-Qilāʿī, see Joseph Moukarzel, *Gabriel Ibn al-Qilāʿī († ca 1516). Approche biographique et étude du corpus*. Préface de Gérard Troupeau, Kaslik: Université du Saint Sprit, 2007.

40 About the shift /dh/ < /d/ in Arabic, as in the dialectal registers, see Blau, GCA, p. 108 § 16.2; Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 98-100; Bengtsson, *Two Arabic Versions*, p. 116 § 3.2.6; Levin, *Die griechisch-arabische*, p. 19; Corriente, *Sketch*, p. 45 § 2.13.2; Blau, *Emergence*, pp. 76, 227, 231.

ܚ	=	ح	/ḥ/	206a[a]
ܚ	=	خ	/kh/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܚ	=	ك	/k/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܚ̰	=	خ	/kh/	205b[b]
ܗ	=	ه < ة	/ah/ ~ /at/	205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]
ܗ̈	=	ة	/ah/ ~ /at/	205b[a], 206a[a]

As can be seen in the above chart, graphemes ܓ, ܕ and ܬ are used to transcribe two different Arabic consonants:[41] ܓ = ج/غ, ܕ = د/ذ and ܬ = ت/ث. The use of *qudshōyō* in consonant ܙ in order to avoid confusions showing the correct spelling of the Arabic sound is not used sistematically by the copyist. Like in Judaeo-Arabic, the use of ܙ for rendering ض and ظ is the result of the coalescense of both Arabic sounds, which are not discriminated in Neoarabic dialects.[42] The copyist uses grapheme ܚ to transcribe three Arabic consonants: ح, خ and ك whereas ܚ̰ is used in an instance to represent خ. Finally, as usual in Christian Arabic manuscripts *tā' marbūṭah*[43] is represented under two realizations: with and without diacriticals.

5. Traductological notes

5.1. Gentilics

The term روم < ܪ̈ܗܘܡܝܐ/ܪܗܘܡܝܐ (205b[a]),[44] فرس < ܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ (205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]), عرب < ܛܝ̈ܝܐ (205b[a], 205b[b]), طأيين < ܛܝܝܐ < ܛܝ̈ܝܐ (205b[b]), عرب فرس/عرب الفرس < ܥܪܒ ܦܪܣ/ܥܪܒ ܠܦܪܣ < ܛܝ̈ܝܐ < ܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ (205b[b], 206a[a]), عرب المسيحيين < ܥܪܒ ܠܡܫܝܚܝܐ < ܛܝ̈ܝܐ ܟܪ̈ܣܛܝܢܐ (205b[b]). For مسيحيين/مسيح (< ܡܫܝܚܝܐ/ܡ̄ܫܝܚܐ) we have ܟܪ̈ܣܛܝܢܐ < χρη/ιστιανοί[45] (205b[a], 205b[b]).[46]

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[41] Cf. J. Assfalg, 'Arabische Handschriften in syrischer Schrift (Karšūnī)', in *Grundriß der Arabischen Philologie. I*, pp. 299-300.

[42] Blau, GCA, pp. 113-114 § 20.2; id., 'Das frühe Neuarabisch in mittelarabischen Texten', in *Grundriß der Arabischen Philologie*, pp. 101-102.

[43] Blau, GCA, pp. 115-121 §§ 24.1-24.4; Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 44-48 § 47; Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 109-112; Bengtsson, *Two Arabic Versions*, pp. 124-127 § 3.2.13.

[44] Cf. Friedrich Schwally, *Idioticon des christlich palästinischen Aramaeisch*, Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Buchhandlung, 1893, p. 112.

[45] Cf. James Hope Moulton & George Milligan, *The vocabulary of the Greek New Testament illustrated from the papyri and other non-literary sources*, London: Methuen and Co., 1914-29, p. 693.

[46] On ܟܪ̈ܣܛܝܢܐ in Michael the Syrian, see Monferrer-Sala, ''New skin for old stories'. Queens Zenobia and Māwiya, and Christian Arab groups in the Eastern frontier during the 3rd–4th centuries CE',

The term ܛܝܝ̈ܐ (*ṭayyoyē*) is used to render the plural σαρακηνοί, whose singular σαρακηνός means both 'Saracen' and 'Arab'.[47] The word *ṭayyoyē* is a plural adapted from the Arabic Ṭayyi', i.e. the tribe of the Banū Ṭayyi',[48] The word σαρακηνός, whose etymon is the Aramaic *sarqî*, pl. *sarqiyîn* (סרקי, pl. סרקיין),[49] reflects the social history of this desert frontier, where semi-nomadic groups with a characteristic *modus vivendi* converged.[50] In fact, the plural σαρακηνοί became current in 4th century CE, replacing earlier terms such as σκηνῖται 'dwellers in tents'.[51] Whilst the term ܛܝܝ̈ܐ had certainly undergone some diachronic evolution, and at earlier stages had been used to identify semi-nomadic groups known in Greek as βαρβάροι[52] or σαρακηνοί,[53] by Michael's time, the term was one of several used to refer to the Muslims.

5.2. Cognates

The Arab translator frequently uses Arabic cognate forms of the original Syriac: e.g. سنة < ܫܢܬܐ (205b[a]), روسا < ܪ̈ܫܐ (205b[a]), كهنة < ܟܗܢܘܬܐ (205b[a]), سبوا < ܫܒܘ (205b[a]), مدينة < ܡܕܝܢܬܐ (205b[a], 205b[b]), ملك < ܡܠܟ (205b[a], 205b[b], 206a[a]), كتب < ܟܬܒ (205b[a], 206a[a], مكتوب < ܡܟܬܘܒ, كتبنا < ܟܬܒܢܐ and اكتب < ܐܟܬܒ in 206a[a]), كل < ܟܠ (205b[a]), عالية < ܥܠܝܬܐ (205b[b]), يوم < ܝܘܡ (205b[b]), جمال < ܓܡܠܐ (205b[b]), أياد < ܐܝܕܐ (205b[b]), مات < ܡܝܬ (205b[b]), أتى < ܐܬܐ (205b[b], 206a[a]), ذهب < ܕܗܒ (205b[b], 206a[a]), قرأ < ܩܪܐ (206a[a]), رأس < ܪܫܐ (206a[a]), اسم < ܫܡ (206a[a]), مثل < ܡܬܠܐ (206a[a]), قطع < ܦܣܩ (205b[b]).

in *Mapping Knowledge: Cross-Pollination in the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Charles Burnett and Pedro Mantas-España (Arabica Veritas, 1), Córdoba: Oriens Academic, 2014, p. 96.

47 G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961, p. 1222b.

48 J.P. Monferrer-Sala, 'De viaje por el desierto de al-Nafūd. A propósito de *Ṭayyāyē, ḥanpē w-ma'addāyē*', *Entre Oriente y Occidente. Ciudades y viajeros en la Edad Media*, ed. J.P. Monferrer Sala and M.D. Rodríguez Gómez, Granada: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Granada, 2005, pp. 333-356 (pp. 339-350 in particular).

49 F. Corriente, *Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords: Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician and Kindred Dialects*, (Handbook of Oriental Studies. 1 The Near and Middle East, 97), Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2008, 431a. See also M.C.A. Macdonald, 'On Saracens, the Rawwāfa inscription and the Roman army', in M.C.A. Macdonald, *Literacy and Identity in Pre-Islamic Arabia*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009, VIII, pp. 1-26.

50 F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC – AD 337*, Cambridge MA – London: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 435-436.

51 M.C.A. Macdonald, 'Arabians, Arabias, and the Greeks: contact and perceptions", in id., *Literacy and Identity*, V, pp. 19-21, and id., 'On Saracens', in id., *Literacy and Identity*, VIII, p. 4.

52 V. Christides, 'Arabs as 'Barbaroi' before the Rise of Islam', *Balkan Studies* 10 (1969), pp. 315-324.

53 D. F. Graf, 'Rome and the Saracens: Reassesing the Nomadic Menace', in *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 24-27 Juin 1987*, ed. Toufic Fahd, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989, pp. 341-400. Cf. V. Christides, 'The Names ΑΡΑΒΕΣ, ΣΑΡΑΚΗΝΟΙ, and their False Byzantine Etymologies', *Byzantium* 65 (1972), pp. 329-333.

5.3. Numbers

In rendering ordinal numbers the translator gives a calque on the alphanumeric value of the Syriac-Arabic referent: ج < ܓ̄ (205bª).

5.4. Anthroponims

For rendering personal names, the translator uses apocopated forms based on two different referents: يوسطيان < ܝܘܣܛܝܢܐ < Ἰουστίνος (205bª, 205bᵇ, 206aª), مرقيان < ܡܪܩܝܢܐ < Μαρκιανός < Marcianus (205bª, 205bᵇ, 206aª), اققيوس < ܐܩܩܝܘܣ < Ἀκάκιος < Acacius (205bᵇ), مندر (< منذر) < ܡܢܕܪ (205bᵇ, 206aª), حارث < ܚܪܬܐ < ܚܝܪܐ (205bᵇ) is an Arabic name frequently used in Nabataean inscriptions like *ḥrtt* (cf. Gr. Ἀρέτας), the realisation of which was probably Ḥāritha by analogy with the later Arabic nominal form.[54] As for قبوس (cf. قابوس) < ܩܘܣ (205bᵇ) is the adaptation of Persian *Kāvus*.

5.5. Toponims

The translator adapted the place-names from Syriac: e.g. نصيبين < ܢܨܝܒܝܢ (205bª, 206aª),[55] دارة < ܕܐܪܐ < ܕܪܐ (cf. Gr. Δάρας; 205bª, 206aª),[56] أنطاكية < ܐܢܛܝܘܟܝܐ < ܐܢܛܝܘܟ (i.e. ܐܢܛܝܘܟܝܐ)[57] < Ἀντιόχεια (206aª).[58] In the case of حرتا < ܚܪܬܐ (205bᵇ) the translator offers a calque of

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54 M. O'Connor, 'The Arabic Loanwords in Nabatean Aramaic', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45:3 (1986), p. 227. Cf. J. Cantineau. *Le nabatéen*, 2 vols, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1930 (rep. Osnabrück, 1978), I, pp. 38, 40, 46; II, p. 101; John F. Healey, *The Nabataean Tomb Inscriptions of Mada'in Salih*. Edited with Introduction, Translation and Commentary (Journal of Semitic Studies. Supplement 1), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 78. See also F. C. Burkitt, *The Syriac Forms of the New Testament Proper Names* (Proceedings of the British Academy, V), London: Oxford University Press, 1911-12, p. 8; Stanley A. Cook, *A Glossary of the Aramaic Inscriptions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898 (rep. Eugene, Or., 2004), p. 57; Glenn W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, Cambridge, Mass. – London: Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 23.

55 On Nisibis, see Jean-Marie Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (CSCO, 388, Subsidia 54), Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1977.

56 For this northern Mesopotamian fortress city, see Michael Whitby 'Procopius' description of Dara ("Buildings" II.1-3)', in *The defence of the Roman and Byzantine East. Proceedings of a colloquium held at the University of Sheffield in April 1986*, ed. P. Freedman and D. Kennedy (BAR International Series 297/II), Oxford: BAR, 1986, pp. 737-783.

57 R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus syriacus*. Collegerunt Stephanus M. Quatremere et al., 2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1879, 1901, I, col. 266. Cf. Arthur John MacClean, *Dictionary of the dialects of vernacular Syriac*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901, p. 15b.

58 On Antioch, see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Syriac *Ḥerthā* (*Ḥirtā*) instead of Arabic al-Ḥīrah, that means "(military) camp" (cf. Gr. παρεμβολή).[59]

5.6. Loanwords

The few loanwords used in the fragment derive largely from Greek and Syriac:[60] قيسر < ܩܝܣܪ/ܩܣܪ < καῖσαρ < *caesar* (205b[a]),[61] عسكر < ܥܣܟܪ (205b[a], 205b[b] [pl. عساكر < ܥܣܟܪ̈ܐ], 206a[a]; cf. معسكر < ܡܥܣܟܪ in 206a[a]),[62] قيامة < ܩܝܡܬܐ (205b[a]),[63] نيسان < ܢܝܣܢ < ܢܝܣܢ/ניסן < Akkadian *nisannu*[64] (205b[a]), منجنيقلا < ܡܐܟܢܝܩܘܬܐ = ܡܟܢܝܡܛ̈ܐ < μηχανήματα, "warlike engine"[65] (205b[b]), ابراجا < ܐܦܪ̈ܓܐ < πύργοι, "wall tower"[66] (205b[b]).

5.7. Technical terms

The term والي < ܘܠܝ (205b[a]) is a translation of ܡܪܙܒܢܐ, a Persian loanword which means "marquis", a governor of a district.[67] As for رسول/رسل < ܪܣܘܠ/ܪܣܠ; the pl. translates ܐܝܙܓܕܐ, "messenger" (205b[a], 206a[a]). In the case of sg. رسول, this is a

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59 Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the fourth century*, Washigton: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984, pp. 490-498.

60 Cf. J. Retsö, 'Aramaic/Syriac Loanwords', in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*. General Editor Kees Versteegh, 4 vols, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006-9, I, pp. 178-182, and D. Gutas, 'Greek Loanwords', in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, II, pp. 198-202.

61 Cf. Monferrer-Sala, 'Greek Administrative Loanwords in Nabataean Inscriptions', *Mediterranean Language Review* 20 (2013), pp. 102-103; J. F. Healey, 'Lexical loans in early Syriac: a comparison with Nabataean Aramaic", *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 12 (1995), p. 81 (rep. id., *Law and Religion between Petra and Edessa: Studies in Aramaic Epigraphy on the Roman Frontier*, Farnham, Surrey, 2011, n. XIV).

62 R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus syriacus*, II, col. 2938.

63 R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus syriacus*, II, col. 3535; M. Sokoloff, *A dictionary of Christian Palestinian Aramaic* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 234), Leuven – Paris – Walpole: Peeters, 2014, p. 371a.

64 Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. Unter Benutzung des lexikalischen Nachlasses von Bruno Meisner, 3 vols, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1969, 1972, 1981, II, p. 794. Cf. Carl Brockelman, *Lexicon syriacum*, Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1928 (2nd. augmented ed.), p. 427b. See also Avi Hurvitz, *A Concise Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew: Lingüistic Innovations in the Writings of the Second Temple Period*, in collaboration with Leeor Gootlieb, Aaron Hornkohl and Emmanuel Mastéy (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 160), Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014, pp. 182-184.

65 E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100)*, Cambridge - Leipzig: Harvard University Press - Otto Harrassowitz, 1914, p. 758b; Henry George Liddell & Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, New York-Chicago, CI: American Book Company (8th ed.), 1897, p. 965a.

66 Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1348a.

67 Claudia A. Ciancaglini, *Iranian Loanwords in Syriac* (Beiträge zur Iranistik, 28), Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2008, pp. 209-210.

translation of ܡܓܝܣܛܪܝܢܐ, a calque of Greek μαγιστριανός, "master (of emperor's house)"[68] (206a[a]). It must be emphasized that *rasūl* is a neologism connected to the Syriac ܫܠܝܚܐ ("messenger; apostle"), a technicism in Christian Aramaic and Gnostic literature, which is related with qur'ānic *rasūl*.[69] The expression روسا الكهنه < رؤساء الكهنة is the literal translation of ܪܝܫ ܟܘܡܪܐ (205b[b]), and رئيس الجيش < ܪܝܫ ܐܠܓܝܫ (205b[b]) translates ܪܝܫ ܚܝܠܐ.

5.8. Translation remarks

With only occasional exceptions, the Arabic-*Karshūnī* version is a literal translation of the Syriac text. The Arab translator has adopted various translation strategies, examples of which are classified below:

5.8.1. Change of the original meaning: ܒܪ ܚܠܬܗ ("the son of his aunt") is rendered into ابن أخته < ܐܒܢ ܐܟܬܗ ("the son of his sister").[70] Marcian was cousin of Justin and nephew of Justinian.[71]

5.8.2. Completion of the syntagm: Syriac ܥܐܕܐ ("feast") is translated like عيد القيامة < ܥܝܕ ܐܠܩܝܐܡܗ, "Feast of the Resurrection", i.e. Easter (205b[a]).

5.8.3. Omission: This is the only case in which a sentence of the Syriac text has been omitted, e.g. ܘܐܬܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܡܫܪܝܬܐ ܕܩܒܘܣ, "and arriving Qābūs' groups".

5.8.4. Addition: Arabic-*Karshūnī* بالسمائيّ الالهيّ < ܒܐܠܣܡܐܝ ܐܠܐܠܗܝ ("celestial divine (permission)") is a defective translation of Syriac ܒܡܦܣܢܘܬܐ ܐܠܗܝܬܐ ("by divine permission") rendered in the Armenian version like "divine protection".[72]

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68 Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, p. 726.

69 Geo Widengren, *Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension*, Uppsala - Wiesbaden: Lundequistska Bokhandeln – Otto Harrassowitz, 1955, pp. 15, 55-65, 65-79.

70 On the patronymic mark *ibn/b.* in South Arabian epigraphic texs, cf. Alessandra Avanzini, 'L'anthroponymie en Arabie du Sud comme source pour l'histoire', in *Études sud-arabes. Recueil offert à Jacques Ryckman* (Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 39), Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1991, p. 20.

71 *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813.* Translated with Introduction and Commentary by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, with the assistance of Geoffrey Greatrex, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 364 (n. 17), 366 (n. 3). Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, Chronicle. Part III. Translated with notes and introduction Witold Witakowski (Translated texts for Historians, 22), Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996, p. 129.

72 Ischôk, *Chronique de Michel le Grand arménienne*, p. 206.

By way of conclusion: a textual note

At the sunset of the journey, let me add just a few lines on the transmission of the episode on the struggle between Qābūs and al-Mundhir, and the Arabic-*Karshūnī* version.

Melkite chronicler Maḥbūb al-Manbijī (10th c. CE) gathered a brief information about a period close to the episode of al-Mundhir and Qābūs in his *Kitāb al-ʿunwān*. Most significant of the sentence is the expression *ṣāḥib al-ʿarab* to refer to al-Mundhir instead of king of the Arabs (*malik al-ʿarab*), with which undoubtedly Maḥbūb wished to show that al-Mundhir was a phylarch, but not a king. The sentence runs as follows:[73]

وفي هذه السنه وجّه الملك وفدًا الى المنذر صاحب العرب ليصالحه لاغزاء الروم وخرّب ديارهم وسبى اهلها

> "In this same year (8) emperor (Justin II) sent a delegation to al-Mundhir, lord of the Arabs, to make peace with him, because he attacked the Romans, destroyed their buildings, and made captive to its people".

In the case of the anonymous *Chronicle of 1234*, this focused its version on the motif of the two letters sent by Justin to al-Mundhir and Marcian with the aim of killing the former.[74]

However, the text contained in the *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus (13th c. CE), though smaller than Michael the Syrian's account, seems to depend on the same source as Michael. Bar Hebraeus focuses on the most significant features of the narrative, particularly in the conflict between al-Mundhir and Qābūs, the episode of the two letters, and the failed assassination attempt on al-Mundhir.[75]

Furthermore, a longer account of this episode can be read in the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus (6th c. CE), which is undoubtedly the source of Michael the Syrian. Michael, like in other instances, epitomized the episode contained in

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73 Alexandre Vasiliev (ed., trans.), *Kitab al-ʿUnvan. Histoire universelle écrit par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj*, tome II/2, in *Patrologia Orientalis VIII*, ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau, Paris: Firmin-Didot et C[ie], 1912, p. 425 (= 165).

74 *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, edition and translation by Jean-Baptiste Chabot (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Scriptores Syri, 14-14), Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae – J. Gabalda, 1920, I, p. 205 (Syriac), II, 161-162 (Latin trans.).

75 Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*. Facsimile edition and translation by Ernest A. Wallis Budge, London: Oxford University Press, 1932 (rep. Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), Syriac in vol. II, pp. 31r[a-b] (l. 35ff.)- 31v[a] (ls.1-6), English translation in vol. I, pp. 79-80.

John of Ephesus' *Historia ecclesiastica*.[76] As for Bar Hebraeus, it appears that he knew both texts, but he used Michael the Syrian' epitome on which he composed a shortened version.

One last word on the Arabic-*Karshūnī* version. The Arabic translator has faithfully followed the Syriac original, including only a few changes. The Arabic translation exhibits use of cognate forms, the calque strategy to adapt proper names and place names, and a moderate use of loanwords and technical terms, all drawn from Syriac and Greek.

[76] Cf. I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, p. 476. Cf. Muriel Debié and David Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing, c. 500-c. 11400', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, 400-1400*, ed. by Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 174.

Appendix

John of Ephesus' account: Syriac text[77]

ܬܫܥܝܬܐ ܕܬܪ̈ܬܝܢ. ܕܥܠ ܡܘܢܕܪ ܡܛܥܝܢܘܬܗ
ܦܐܪܣܘܦ. ܘܐܝܟܢ ܐܬܒܥܝܘܗܝ ܒܫܪܪܐ.

ܡܢ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܐܬܦܬܚ ܒܐܬܪܘܬܐ ܕܪ̈ܗܘܡܝܐ.
ܬܘܥܒܬܐ ܡܕܡ ܕܗܘ̈ܪܐ ܚܕܕܝܢ. ܒܕ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܕܚܠ
ܥܘܕ̈ܪܐ ܡܠܘܬܐ ܕܬܥ̈ܒܝܕܬܐ. ܡܢ ܡ̈ܠܟܘܬܐ ܦܪ̈ܣܘܦܘܢ
ܡ̈ܠܟܘܬܐ ܒܪ ܚܒܘܫܗ ܡܬܠܟܐ ܘܦܩܘܕܐ ܢܟܕ: ܗܘ
ܕܢܗ ܡܢ ܙ̈ܒܢ ܫܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܒܘ ܘܒܗܐ ܡܬܪ̈ܬܝܢ ܗܘܘ
ܠܡܕܢܚܐ ܐܦܬܘܗܝ ܗܘܐ. ܗܢܐ ܕܒܕ ܕܠܡܟܐ ܕܟܠ
ܐ̈ܦܝ ܦܠܛܝܢܐ ܕܦ̈ܘܠܝܛܐ ܬܘܒ ܗܘܐ. ܟܕ ܫܠܝܚ
ܘܫܕܪ ܐܓܪܬܐ ܥܠ ܐܝܕܝܗ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ. ܗܘ ܕܒܕ ܗܘܐ
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܠܗ ܦܘ̈ܪܢܐ. ܘܦܩܕ ܥܠܘܗܝ ܫܠܝܚܘܬܐ
ܕܢܟܣܘܢܝܗ. ܘܟܬܒ ܥܠܘܗܝ ܦܩܘܕܬܐ ܒܕ ܢܟܪܐ. ܘܡܛܠ
ܕܐܦ ܐܬܐ ܗܘܐ ܕܗܟܢܐ ܢܟܣܘܢܝܗ. ܐܝܟ ܥܠܘܗܝ
ܡܢܦܩܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ ܘܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ ܠܥܘܢܕܢܐ.
ܘܗܘܬ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܒܐܘܠܨܢܐ. ܘܐܘܕܥܘ ܒܥܘ̈ܪܢܘܗܝ
ܟܕ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܦܘ̈ܪܢܐ ܐܬܐ ܗܘܐ ܒܗ ܥܠ
ܡ̈ܢܗܘܢ. ܟܕ ܚܙܘ ܕܗܘܐ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܒܓܒܐ ܡܢ ܒܗܘ
ܡܢ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ. ܘܐܬܒܥܝ ܕܒܕ ܗܠܝܢ ܡܢ ܠܗ ܡܬܬܥܠܡ
ܗܘܘ. ܗܠܝܢ ܡܢ ܠܒܪ. ܡܬܚܫܒܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܕܢܟܣܘܢܝܗ
ܠܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܘܢܫܪܟܘܢܗ. ܘܟܕ ܥܠܝܗܘܢ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ
ܫܟܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܘܡܬܦܝܣܝܢ ܕܢܥܠܘܢ ܠܗ. ܗܘܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܚܕ
ܟܬܒܐ ܕܝܗܒܘܗ ܗܘܐ ܐܝܟ ܐܪܒܥܠܦܐ ܡܕܢܚܝ
ܗܘܐ ܡܢ ܦܘܠܝܛܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܥܠ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܠܐ
ܫܘܚܠܦܐ ܕܬܘܩܦܘܬܐ ܕܢܝܫܘܗܝ ܡܢ ܥܒܕܘܗܝ ܘܢܟܣܘܢ
ܘܦܩܕ ܕܠܗ ܘܢܟܪܗ ܡܢ ܐܬܪܘܬܐ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ. ܗܟܢܐ

77 John Bishop of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*. Now first edited by William Cureton, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1853, VI 2-4 (pp. 342-348).

ܕܟܕ ܒܓܠܐ ܘܢܗܘܝ ܦܘܪܩܢܐ: ܟܕ ܡܬܦܢܝܢ ܥܡ ܢܫܠܡ
ܡܬܟܬܫܝܢ ܥܠ ܒܝܬܝܢ: ܘܡܬܡܟܢܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܕܢܓܠܘܢ
ܠܗܘܢ ܐܣܝܐ ܘܢܟܣܘܗܝ ܕܡܥܪܬܐ. ܐܬܬܘܬܒܘ ܟܠܗ
ܫܠܝܐ ܘܐܬܚܒܠܘ ܒܢܝܣܘܗܝ. ܘܟܕ ܡܬܥܒܕܐ ܡܬܦܢܝܐ
ܢܢܝܚ ܗܘܘ ܘܡܬܠܒܟ ܘܦܪܥܢ ܗܘܐ ܠܡܟܟܫܢܘ
ܠܢܒܝܝܢ. ܟܕ ܥܒܕܘ ܦܘܪܩܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܠܘܬ ܐܢܘܢ. ܗܘܐ
ܠܐ ܢܦܘܩ ܕܟܒܫܐ ܒܓܠܐ ܢܚܠ: ܒܓܠܠ ܕܡܒܟܫܢܘ
ܠܗܘܐ ܡܥܪܬܐ. ܘܗܘܫܐ ܠܓܒ ܢܦܫܝ ܘܡܕܢܚ ܠ
ܬܪܝܢ ܡܘܬܢܝܢ ܒܠܝܠܝܐ. ܘܒܓܘܪܐ ܡܟܝܢ ܕܐܬܦܩܕ ܠܝ
ܚܒܪ. ܥܠܝܗ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܦܩܕ ܢܗܘܐ.܀. ܗܘ ܕܝܢ
ܢܓܒ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܘܡܒܟܝܢ ܘܐܬܚܫܒܘ. ܘܐܬܬܠ ܟܗ
ܡܢܝܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܫܠܝܚܘܗܝ. ܘܢܬܦܘܗ ܠܟܐ ܘܠܟܒ.
ܘܐܪܓܙ ܘܦܩܕ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ. ܟܕ ܡܢܝܢ ܠܗ. ܘܐܡܪ
ܕܡܬܐܡܪܐ ܗܘܬ ܕܐܝܟ ܦܟܐ ܡܫܝܚܘܗܝ. ܘܗܟܢܐ
ܟܕ ܟܠܗ ܫܠܝܐ ܡܬܟܢܫ: ܘܐܬܒܠܗ ܐܢܬܐ ܕܟܠܗ
ܐܦܝܣܩܘܦܐ. ܘܟܕ ܡܬܩܢܝܢ ܗܢܘܢ ܡܢܢ ܡܩܘܬܐ
ܒܐܠܦܘܬ. ܥܠܠܘ ܘܐܬܒܥܝܘܗܝ ܠܫܘܩܐ. ܘܡܦܩܢܘܗܝ
ܠܡܘܬܪܗ. ܘܡܫܡܫܐ ܒܒܝܬ ܟܠܗ ܫܠܝܐ. ܘܗܦܟܘ
ܘܐܬܪܢܝܘ ܥܡ ܡܥܪܬܐ ܠܡܘܬܪܗܘܢ. ܟܕ ܐܬܒܠܝ
ܘܡܬܚܠܝܢ ܥܠ ܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܦܩܘܢ ܠܐܘܪܫܠܡ ܒܝܘܡܐ ܠܓܒܐ
ܘܡܫܡܫܢܐ. ܘܗܘܒ ܡܛܠ ܗܢ ܗܢܐ ܟܕ ܦܪܚܝܢ ܗܘܘ
ܕܢܓܠܘܢ ܘܢܦܩܘܢ ܡܥܪܬܐ. ܐܬܬܦܩܘ ܠܡܘܬܪܗܘܢ
ܟܕ ܠܘܬ ܕܪܫܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܢ ܬܟܠܬܟܝܘܬܗܘܢ. ܘܗܘܘ
ܒܘܝܐܐ ܘܫܘܒܚܐ ܠܦܪܘܩܗܘܢ.܀ ܐܠܐ ܘܟܕ ܢܝܚ
ܗܠܝܢ ܫܠܝܐ ܕܦܘܪܩܐ ܐܝܟ ܗܘܐ ܒܗ ܒܡܥܪܬܐ:
ܬܘܪܥܬܐ ܘܡܫܦܟܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܚܝܠܐ ܕܪܘܚܢܝܐ:

ܘܡܫܡܫܢܐ ܕܢܒܝܐ ܕܡܬܦܢܐ. ܬܒܥܘ ܘܐܬܬܢܝܚܘ
ܘܐܬܚܝܢ ܘܪܕܦܘ ܒܬܪܗܘܢ. ܘܢܦܠܘ ܫܠܝܐ ܕܓܠܝܐ
ܕܐܢܫܝܘܬܐ ܦܝܫܝܢ ܗܘܘ. ܘܫܪܒܘ ܘܐܬܒܢܘ ܡܢܗܘܢ
ܠܦܓܪܝܐ. ܘܗܟܢܐ ܗܦܟܘ ܠܡܪܢܝܘܬܗܘܢ ܟܕ
ܡܫܬܚܝܢ ܘܡܬܒܣܝܢ ܥܠ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܡܢܗܘܢ ܘܡܢܗܘܢ
ܟܪܒ ܐܝܟ ܠܡܘܬܒܐ. ܘܒܓܘܪܐ ܒܬܪܗ ܘܐܬܕܒܪ
ܟܠܗܝܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܠܡܠܟܘܬܗܘܢ ܟܕ ܐܡܪܝܢ. ܕܐܕܪܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ
ܡܒܪܟ. ܒܡܘܬܒܐ ܡܛܠ ܕܐܬܒܪܘ ܐܝܟ ܐܠܗܐ
ܬܪܥܐ ܥܒܕܐ ܘܢܘܪܐ: ܕܡܢܟܢܐ ܕܗܢܘܢ ܟܕ ܦܘܪܩܢܗ
ܡܠܟܘܬܗܘܢ ܢܦܠܘ ܒܫܘܪܐ. ܘܥܡܐ ܐܝܟܘ ܠܡܬܦܢܐ
ܒܢܓܕܐ. ܘܒܬܪܗ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܡܐܠܝܢ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܢ
ܡܥܪܬܐ.

ܡܛܠ ܗܟܝܠ ܢܒܥܘܢ ܘܗܕܪܐ ܕܡܗܝܡܢܘܬܗܘܢ ܕܬܫ̈ܒܚܬܐ ܕܟܠܗ̇ ܬ̈ܒܝܠܐ: ܘܠܘܒܒ ܠܢܦܫ̈ܐܝܬ ܘܡܫܪܪܐܝܬ ܓܠܝܬ ܦܪܨܘܦܗ ܕܡܦܠܚܢܐ ܡܠܟܐ: ܘܠܡܕܡ ܕܟܠ ܡܢܕܪ ܒܪ ܚܪܬ: ܘܗܟܢܐ ܡܛܠܬܗ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܪ̈ܗܘܡܝܐ: ܒܪ ܚܠܐܡܬ ܘܐܠܐ ܒܟܢܫܐ ܕܟܢܘܫܬܐ: ܬܠܝܢ ܘܦܩܕ ܠܐ ܢܬܟܠܡ ܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܡܥܒ̈ܕܢܘܬܐ ܠܘܬ ܗܪ̈ܛܝܩܘ: ܘܠܘܬ ܡܢܕܪ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܓܠܝܬܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܗܕܐ ܦܓܪ: ܒܪ ܚܪܬ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܛܝ̈ܝܐ ܕܪ̈ܗܘܡܝܐ: ܗܘ ܕܒܦܘܪܥܢܘܬܐ ܘܒܫܠܝܛܘܬܐ ܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܗ: ܟܠܗܘܢ ܛܝ̈ܝܐ ܕܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ ܢܟܦܝܢ ܗܘܘ: ܘܟܕ ܢܦܩ ܕܗܒܬ ܠܗ.

ܐܫܬܠܡ ܘܐܬܚܠܦ ܥܠ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܚ̈ܝܠܘܗܝ ܘܦܪ̈ܫܘܗܝ ܘܫܠܡܘ. ܘܗܟܢܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܡܟܝܠ ܐܫܬܠܡܬ ܠܗ̇ ܟܪ̈ܝܗܘܢ ܟܠܗ̇ ܚܐܪܬܗ ܀ ܡܢܕܪ ܐܬܟܒܫ ܘܐܬܦܩ ܒܐܪܥܗܘܢ ܕܒܝܬ ܚܪܬ. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܚܝܕܬܗܘܢ ܟܠܗ̇ ܬܘܒ ܗܘܬ. ܘܒܙ̈ܙܐ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܡ̈ܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܬܚܝܬܗܘܢ. ܗܠܝܢ ܕܗܘ ܝܗܒ ܡܢܕܪ ܗܟܢ ܐܬܡܓܢܪ. ܘܪܕܝܘ ܒܛܝܒܘܬܐ ܢܣܝܒܐ. ܘܥܒܕ ܠܟܠܗܘܢ ܐܢ̈ܫܘܗܝ ܘܒ̈ܢܘܗܝ ܘܐܪ̈ܒܘܗܝ: ܘܠܟܠܗܘܢ ܡܫܪ̈ܝܬܗ. ܘܡܢ ܥܠ ܒܝܠܗܘܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ. ܟܕ ܗܠܝܢ ܠܓܒܪ. ܠܐ ܫܟܝܚ ܗܘܘ ܕܡܫܬܟܚܝܢ ܠܡܗܘܐ ܡܕܒܪܢܗܘܢ. ܘܝܠܕ ܘܚܣܪܘ ܐܢܘܢ. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܟܕ ܝܕܥ ܦܓܪܗ ܢܟܠܗܘܢ: ܢܩܦܗ ܕܒܪܗ ܕܡܢܕܪ ܘܫܠܡܗ: ܕܟܠܗ ܘܐܫܬܩܠܘ ܘܒܪ̈ܘܗܝ ܡܢ ܓܘ ܠܟܠܗ ܫܠܡܗ. ܥܡ ܘܥܡ ܐܚܘ̈ܗܝ ܓܒܘܪܐ ܘܐܫܬܘܕܥ ܡܠܟܘܬܗ. ܘܓܒ ܓܒܪܐ ܘܐܬܝܬ ܒܡܕܒܪܐ: ܘܐܬܚܙܝ ܠܟܠܗ ܡܕܝܢܬܗ ܘܐܢܫܬܗ. ܘܠܟܠܗܘܢ ܡ̈ܕܝܢܬܗ. ܘܠܓܒܝ ܐܬܝܩܪ ܘܐܬܐ ܠܬܚܝܬ ܓܒܝܗ ܘܥܡ ܦ̈ܪܫܘܗܝ. ܘܫܪܟܐ ܢܦܩ ܘܫܒܩ. ܘܟܕ ܢܦܩ ܠܡܕܒܪܗ ܕܝܠܗ ܒܐܪܥܬܗ ܦܢܝܘ. ܟܠ ܬܠܬܐ ܦ̈ܢܝܢ. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܟܠܗ ܬܪ̈ܝܢܗܘܢ ܘܟܠܗ ܫܘܪ̈ܗܘܢ ܕܛܝ̈ܝܐ ܕܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ ܠܘܬ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܗܘܐ. ܟܕ ܢܦܩ ܬܘܒ ܠܒܪܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ. ܐܡܪܐ ܕܝܢ ܐܢܬ ܗܘܘ ܡܩܒ̈ܠܝܗܘܢ. ܦܓܪܗܘܢ ܘܢܦܫ ܠܗ ܠܡܕܒܪܐ ܕܐܪܥܐ ܕܠܝܠܗ ܕܦܓܪܗܘܢ ܢܦܝܫ. ܘܫܟܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܕܗܘܐ ܦܓܪܗܘܢ ܫܠܡܗܘܢ ܐܢܬܘܬܗܘܢ. ܟܕ ܘܡܬܒܠܐܝܬ ܒܐܟܠܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܦܓܪܝܢ ܒܡܫܪ̈ܝܬܗܘܢ ܕܡܢܕܪ. ܘܠܟܠܗܘܢ ܗܘܘ ܡܩܛܠܝܢ ܠܗܘܢ. ܘܐܬܦܪܩ

ܗܘܘ ܠܒܢ̈ܝܐ ܕܥܡܗܘܢ. ܘܗܟܢܐ ܟܕ ܐܬܐ ܢܒܝܐ
ܥܠ ܟܘܟܒܐ ܕܢܚܬ ܗܘܘ ܬܡܢ. ܗܦܟܘ ܡܢ ܬܡܢ
ܒܚܕܘܬܐ ܘܦܨܝܚܘܬܐ. ܕܪܒܘܬܐ ܘܡܫܬܒܗܪܢܘܬܐ ܕܫܘܒܚܐ
ܘܦܨ̈ܝܚܘܬܐ. ܘܚܒܝܒܘܬܐ ܘܡܟܢܫܐ. ✣ . ܘܐܦ ܟܕ ܒܬܪ
ܐܚܘܗܝ ܐܙܠ ܦܨܗܘ ܚܒܪ ܠܗ ܢܚܠܐ ܘܦܨܝܚܐ. ܘܥܠܝܗ
ܠܗ ܠܓܢܒܪܐ ܕܦܠܚ ܡܪܟܒܐ. ܕܗܘܐ ܐܬܝܡ ܣܡ ܚܠܡܝ.
ܐܦ ܟܕ ܐܝܬ ܢܦܠܬ ܚܠܡ ܐܝܟ ܟܢܘܫܐ: ܘܡܫܡܫܢܝܬ
ܕܩܪܒܬ ܠܝ. ܗܘܐ ܣܡ ܠܢܐܬܒ ܒܡܪܟܒܐ ܐܬܝܡ ܚܠܡܝ.
ܡܫܪ ܗܡ ܥܠܝܗ ܠܗܘܢ. ܕܟܠ ܡܢܐ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܡܚܬܝܢܢ
ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܐܢܐ ܐܢܬ ܐܢܐ. ܘܐܬܦܠܝܛܘ ܘܐܬܦܠܝܛܬ
ܘܟܡ ܡܠܬܐ ܚܕܬܐ ܚܕܐ. ܘܐܡܪ ܐܢܘܢ ܡܢ ܥܠܝܗ
ܒܡܕܒܪܐ. ܟܕ ܠܐ ܗܘܝܢ ܗܘܘ. ܘܢܦܠ ܚܠܡܗܘܢ
ܘܥܠܝܗ ܐܢܘܢ ܘܫܒܩ ܦܘܢܟܐܗܘܢ. ܘܬܘܒ ܨܦܘ ܡܢ
ܡܕܡܗܘܢ. ܘܡܛܠ ܕܐܦ ܡܕܡ ܐܟܠܐ ܒܪ̈ܟܐ ܐܢܫ̈ܝܐ
ܒܡܫܝܚܘܬܗܘܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܚܒܝܒ ܠܝ: ܗܫܟܐ ܗܡ ܕܢܣܒ
ܥܠ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܗܠܝܢ ܟܢܝܫܐ ܕܦܠܚܘܬܐ ܒܦܠܚܘܬ ܩܘܡ.
ܐܢܫܐ ܢܓܠܐ ܐܬܚܒܠ ܚܠܡܗܘܢ: ܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܗܠܝܢ
ܒ̈ܢܝܐ ܩܪܒܐ. ܘܟܠܗܘܢ ܗܢܐ ܟܠܗ ܪܒܘܬܐ ܕܒܬܪܝܢ
ܡܪܟܒܐ. ܟܕ ܫܒܩ ܓܒܪܐ ܡܢ ܦܠܚܐ ܢܦܩܠ ܘܥܒܪܒ.
ܟܬܒ ܠܗ ܟܠ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܟܬܒ. ܘܟܠ ܟܠܗ ܕܒܬܘܗ.
ܘܒܬܪ ܗܠܝܢ ܟܬܒ ܠܗ ܕܢܦܪܘܩ ܠܗ ܕܗܘܟܐ ܕܐܬܝܗܒ
ܠܗ ܢܚܠܐ. ܟܕ ܪܒܝ ܕܦܠܛܘ ܬܘܒ ܡܬܚܒܢܝܢ
ܚܠܡܝ. ܗܘ ܕܟܕ ܗܘ ܕܦܠܛܘ ܦܠܚܐ ܢܚܒܪ:
ܕܟܬܒ ܡܛܠ ܕܢܦܪܘܩ ܠܗ ܕܗܘܟܐ. ܠܓܒ ܘܐܬܡܚܒܬ ܠܗ.
ܘܦܪܩܗ ܘܓܒܡ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ. ܘܦܡ ܟܠܟܗ
ܕܦܠܠܗܘܢ ܟܕܓܠܐ ܟܡܝܢܬܐ.

ܬܢܝܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܢܕܪ. ܕܥܠ ܐܝܟܢ ܕܐܬܬܦܣ
ܡܢ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ ܠܩܘܣܛܢܛܝܢܐ ܘܠܓܙܪܐ.܀.

ܟܕ ܗܟܝܠ ܡܠܟܐ ܘܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܬܘܒܐ
ܡܢܗܘܢ ܕܡܣܟܠܢܘܬܐ ܐܬܕܒܪ. ܒܬܪ ܐܪܒܥܬܐ ܠܘܬ
ܦܠܝܣܘܣ ܦܛܪܝܩܐ. ܐܝܟ ܕܗܘܐ ܒܡܬܪܐ
ܕܡܫܠܛܘܗܝ ܠܡܢܕܪ. ܟܕ ܒܥܐ ܗܘܐ. ܕܗܘܐ ܠܗ
ܟܬܒ ܠܡܢܕܪ ܙܠܝܟ. ܕܢܐܬܐ ܠܘܬܗ. ܒܝܕ ܕܓܝܣܐ
ܕܐܬܐ. ܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܡܦܩܬܗ ܕܠܐ ܬܘܩܢܐ. ܘܬܘܒ ܠܗ.܀.
ܠܡܢܕܪ ܕܝܢ ܟܬܒ ܠܗ. ܕܢܬܠ ܠܗ ܡܘܥܕܪܢܐ ܡܢܗܘܢ
ܐܫܬܐܝܢ: ܟܬܒ ܠܦܠܝܣܘܣ ܦܛܪܝܩܐ ܕܢܫܠܛ ܠܗ.
ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܠܐ ܬܘܩܢܐ ܐܠܐ ܠܘܬܗ ܘܢܫܠܛܝܗ
ܒܡܘܟܪܢܐ.܀. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܐܢܫ ܒܫܪܪܐ
ܗܘܐ ܐܬܓܠܝܬ. ܕܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܫܟܒܢܘܬܐ ܡܢܗܘܢ
ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܐܫܬܘܕܥ ܘܡܘܟܪܢܐ ܘܐܬܬܦܣ ܟܠ
ܦܘܪܥܢܐ ܗܘ ܕܠܘܬ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ ܕܢܦܩ ܬܘܒ ܕܡܢܕܪ.
ܥܡܗ ܒܠܗ ܕܡܢܕܪ: ܘܟܠ ܗܘ ܕܠܘܬ ܡܢܕܪ ܐܬܬܦܣ
ܥܡܗ ܕܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܠܦܬܟܢ. ܘܗܟܢܐ
ܡܬܦܠܣܢܐ ܠܬܪܝܗܘܢ ܦܘܪܥܢܐ: ܘܢܦܩ ܘܐܬܦܟ
ܐܦ ܠܦܘܪܥܢܐ ܠܬܪܝܗܘܢ ܦܪ̈ܣܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܬܬܦܣܢ
ܗܘܘ. ܘܐܫܬܟܚ ܕܡܦܟ ܡܢܕܪ ܦܘܪܥܢܐ ܗܘ ܕܥܒܕ
ܡܦܩܬܗ ܕܠܘܬ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ. ܘܗܘܐ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ ܬܘܒ
ܗܘ ܡܢܕܪ: ܕܟܬܒ ܠܗ ܕܠܐ ܠܘܬ ܪ̈ܘܡܝܐ. ܕܟܬܒܬ
ܠܗ ܕܢܫܠܛ ܒܡܣܝܢ.܀. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܦܓܠ ܠܡܠܟܐ
ܘܦܪܥܗ ܡܢܕܪ ܐܬܬܦܝܣ ܘܡܟܠܐ ܦܓܪܐ ܒܪ ܐܬܪ.
ܕܣܠܩ ܒܓܠܠ ܘܦܢܝܣ ܕܟܠ ܐܦܣ ܐܪܥܐ ܕܪܗܘܡܝܐ:

ܚܒܠ ܦܪܘܣܬܐ ܡܬܦܪܫ ܐܢܫ. ܠܡܪܐ ܫܢܝܐ
ܡܘܢܬ. ܘܐܬܬܠܒ ܪܘܓܙܐ ܘܕܒܪ ܟܠܗ ܢܫܠܡ. ܘܪܘܡ
ܐܝܟ ܟܠ ܡܦܠܬܗ ܒܪ ܐܢܫܐ. ܗܟܢ ܫܢܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ
ܡܢ ܗܘܐ ܗܟܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܪܗܘܡܝܐ ܡܬܬܪܨ ܠܗܘܢ. ܐܢ
ܘܢܗܘܐ ܐܝܟ ܠܓܒܗܘܢ ܐܝܟ. ܘܢܬܦܪܫܘܢ ܠܒܪ ܡܢ
ܡܬܝܕܥܬܐ. ܐܢ ܐܢ ܦܠܓܐܐ ܐܝܟ ܡܢܝܢܐ ܟܡܪܟܐ
ܐܪܘܟܐ ܐܝܟ ܢܩܘܫܬܐ. ܟܕ ܠܐ ܡܬܦܠܣܝܢ
ܐܢܬܘܢ ܠܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܡܟܝܢܘܢ ܠܓܒܪ ܡܬܡܠܠ ܠܟܘܢ.
ܘܫܟܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܦܘܪܟܐ ܠܗܕܒܐ ܕܡܬܝܕܥܝܢ.
ܦܝܢ ܠܓܒܪ. ❖ ܘܡܠܟܐ ܟܝܢܐܝܬ ܠܠܐ ܘܐܝܟܢܐ.
ܟܕ ܓܒܝܢ ܘܡܒܕܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܐܝܠܝܢ.
ܘܐܝܟܢ ܘܡܬܓܒܝܢ ܠܦܘܪܟܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܡܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܡܢ
ܪܗܘܡܝܐ ܕܢܟܝܬܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܢ. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܒܪ
ܗܘܐ ܐܬܬܟܝܢ ܠܦܪܨܘܦܐ ܘܠܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܠܗܘܢ: ܘܒܪܟܘ
ܕܫܠܝܬܐ ܡܟܝܠ ܠܗ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܟܠܗ ܕܓܒܪܐ: ܘܡܠܟܐ
ܪܡܐ ܢܦܫܗ ܟܡܪܟܐ ܕܫܠܦ ܪܘܡܝܐ: ܕܟܒܘ
ܕܡܬܠܠܝܢ. ܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܐܬܟܒܘ ܬܟܝܠܐܝܬ: ܕܢܓܦܘܢ
ܦܪܨܘܦܐ ܘܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܠܐܝܪܐ ܕܪܗܘܡܝܐ:
ܘܡܪܟܘ ܘܐܬܦܩܕܘ ܘܦܠܚܘ ܒܕܡܟܐ ܠܟܠܬ ܐܝܟܢܘܬܐ:
ܘܟܒܘ ܢܟܝܬܐ ܬܦܩܬܐ: ܘܫܟܠܘ ܘܓܡܪܘ ܘܐܬܦܩܕܘ
ܘܦܪܝܐ ܕܪܘܡܬܐ ܘܬܦܩܬܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܡܬܝܢܬܐ ܕܟܒܝܬ
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܘܢܟܪܐ. ܘܟܒܘ ܘܓܒܪܘ ܐܝܟ ܠܟܠܗܘܢ
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ܦܟܝܬܐ. ❖ ❖

John of Ephesus' account: English translation[78]

VI 2 The illustrious Patrician Marcian, a relative of king Justin, was sent by him to command one of the Roman armies in the east; and being warmly zealous for the polity of the Christians, he assembled an army, and laid siege to Nisibis, the frontier town and bulwark of Mesopotamia, and then in possession of the Persians. And having strongly

[78] Cf. *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John Bishop of Ephesus*. Now first translated from the original Syriac by R. Payne Smith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860, VI 2-4 (pp. 367-374).

invested it, and constructed round it a palisade, he commenced, with the aid of the skilful mechanicians whom he had brought with him, to erect more scientific works, consisting of lofty towers and strong covered approaches. And the city began to be distressed, and both its inhabitants and the Persian garrison despaired of their lives when they saw it so hard pressed by the Romans. And as those inside were in alarm, so those outside were making their preparations to assault the city and plunder it; but just as they were ready to storm it, a violent tempered man arrived, named Acacius Archelaus, sent for no just reason by king Justin to deprive Marcian of his command, and cut his girdle, and send him away from the cast. And immediately that he came he showed his orders, just at the time when Marcian and his army were fighting against Nisibis, and expecting to assault it the next day, and win the city; and all were in astonishment, and their hands were weakened. And the illustrious Marcian, who had been assiduously making his preparations, and was upon the point of capturing Nisibis, on hearing the orders, said to Acacius, 'You see how great labour we have taken for the purpose of capturing this city; and now, wait a little, and grant us a delay of two days only, and then do what you have been commanded; for the king has a right that what he orders should be done'. But he was angry with him, and insulted him, and in hot wrath laid hands upon him in the presence of all his officers, and pulled him about, and threw him down, and cut his girdle, scoffing at him, and even, as was said, he struck him on the cheek. And the whole army was indignant, and their hands weakened, and execrating the wickedness which had been done before their eyes, they lowered their standard, and turned it upside down. And thereupon the whole army fled, and left the city far behind them, and loud was their grief and lamentation at what had happened to their commander; for he was a good man and a believer: and besides, at the very time when they were expecting to enter and take the city, they had shown their backs when there was no enemy who pursued them, and had become the laughter and scorn of their foes. And when the Persian army which garrisoned the city saw the breaking up and sadden retreat of the Romans, and Marcian's standard overthrown, they were astonished, and encouraged one another, and armed and pursued after them, and fell upon a body of infantry which remained behind, and defeated and slew most of them, and so returned to the city, laughing and mocking at what had happened to the Romans of their own selves. Forthwith, too, they wrote and informed their king of all these things, saying, 'Come, immediately, and let us cross over into the Roman territory; for our noble gods, the sun and fire, have made them, by the commandment of their king, fall upon one another; and they have dismissed Marcian with scorn, and have all fled and gone away from our city'.

The anger of Justin against Marcian arose from no fault of the latter, but rather from the unbusinesslike habits of the king himself, who allowed the underhand dealings of the weak court of Constantinople to come to light by a carelessness as indefensible as the treachery it disclosed was base. The account of it is as follows:

VI 3 The Tayenses, or Arabs of the north, were at that time divided into two sections, of which the one was allied with Rome, the other with the Persians. Of the former Harith was king, and was held in such general awe and terror by all the nomad tribes, that as long as he lived, no one ventured to disturb the peace. But upon his death the Arabs in alliance with Persia looked with contempt upon his sons and princes and army, and imagined that, 'lo! now at length all his encampment is delivered into our hands!'

Accordingly they gathered themselves together, and pitched their camp in Harith's territories, bringing with them all their flocks, and vast herds of camels. But when Mondir, Harith's eldest son, heard of it, he was very wroth, and burnt with zeal, and taking with him his brothers and sons and nobles and all his army, he fell suddenly upon them, whereas they had expected that he would never venture to make any resistance. They were utterly defeated, therefore, and put to the sword, and their king Kabus, when he saw the fierce onset made by Mondir and his troops, and that already they had broken through and overpowered and slaughtered his hordes, turned his horse, and fled with a few companions, and succeeded in making his escape, but saved nothing of his property. And Mondir entered, and took possession of Kabus' tent, and his entire encampment, and all his baggage, and his herds of camels. Several also of his relatives he made prisoners, and some of his nobles, but the rest he put to the sword. And next he crossed over the Euphrates, and pitched his camp in the territories of Kabus, and marched inland to the distance of sixty leagues, and arrived at the place where the herds and all the riches of the Persian Arabs were. There he pitched his camp for some time, and the hordes of Kabus, on seeing their master's well known tent erected so far in their land, boldly came to it, expecting to find their king there, but on entering, found themselves in Mondir's camp, and were seized and put to death, except some of note, who were kept as prisoners. And after staying there as long as he chose, he set out upon his return with much spoil, consisting of herds of horses and camels and armour and so forth. And after some time had elapsed, Kabus also collected his forces, and sent to Mondir, bidding him meet him in battle: 'for, lo!' said he, 'we are coming upon thee. For though thou didst fall upon us a thief, and imaginedst that thou de-featedst us, behold, we openly draw near to thee for battle'. But Mondir sent in reply, 'Why do ye trouble yourselves? for I am already on my way'. And not only did he consent and make preparations, but with the word effected also the deed. For he met them suddenly in the desert, when they did not expect him, and fell upon them, and threw them into confusion, and slew most of them; and again they fled before him. But inasmuch as we have previously given an account of these achievements elsewhere in our history, our purpose now is to record the iniquitous plot formed against him in violation of all right feeling after these glorious victories, and so great a triumph in two successive battles. For, as Mondir imagined that his success would be acceptable and extolled by the king, he wrote to him an account of all that he had done, and his complete victory; and added a request that he would send him gold that he might hire troops; because be expected that certainly they would gather their forces once more to attack him. And when king Justin heard that he had written to him to send him gold, he was angry, and very indignant, and reviled him, and vowed vengeance against him, and secretly determined in his heart to murder him by some artifice or other.

VI 4 Thus then being filled with the spirit of opposition, king Justin wrote a letter to the patrician Marcian with the intention of having Mondir secretly put to death; and the letter was as follows: 'I have written to Mondir the Arab to bid him come to thee: see, directly that he comes, that thou take off his head, and write and inform me of it. To Mondir I have written in these words: Because of some matters of importance, I have written to the patrician Marcian, requesting him to confer with thee; go therefore to him immediately without delay, and consult with him upon the matters in question'. But, as became subsequently known to everybody, the letters, by the providence of God, were

changed, and the name of Mondir himself was inscribed upon the despatch, directing Marcian to take off Mondir's head; while, by some mistake or other, the letter intended for Mondir was directed to Marcian: and the messenger who started with the two despatches, having delivered them to the persons to whom they were severally addressed, it happened that Mondir received the despatch which gave directions to Marcian to take off his head; and Marcian, on the other hand, that which required Mondir to go to Marcian, to hold the proposed conference. When then Mondir received the despatch, and had read it, he was greatly agitated, and said, 'In return then for my labours and anxieties in behalf of the Roman territory, my reward is the loss of my head. This is my desert'. And being filled with anger, he collected all his people, and bade them provide for his safety, saying, 'If you see any one whomsoever sent unto me from the king of the Romans, if he has but a small escort, seize them, and keep them closely guarded outside your encampment: but if the escort is numerous, at once advance boldly and fall upon them, without giving the slightest credence to anything whatsoever which they shall say unto you, or permitting them to approach on any pretence into the neighbourhood of your encampment'. And thus uninterruptedly day and night the Arab hordes kept armed watch in defence of their king, being ever on the look-out, and ready for battle with any one whomsoever who should come unto them from the Romans. And when the Persians, and the Arabs under the Persian rule, heard the news, and learnt that they had now nothing to fear from Mondir, and that he would not trouble himself to engage in war for the sake of the Romans, who had tried to murder him, they boldly made preparations for invading the Roman territory, and laid it waste with fire and sword as far as Antioch, and captured an immense number of prisoners, and ruined and razed and burnt large and strong towns, almost equal in size to cities, both in the territory of Antioch and elsewhere, and took the inhabitants prisoners, and utterly ruined all these countries, and returned to their land with a mighty spoil.

La Grande Église d'Abraha à Ṣan'ā'
Quelques remarques sur son emplacement, ses dimensions et sa date*

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Selon d'anciennes traditions rapportées par les savants d'époque islamique, la ville de Ṣanʿāʾ aurait compté au moins deux églises. La première est la fameuse al-Qalīs dont le nom est également vocalisé « al-Qulays » ou « al-Qullays ». Dans les inscriptions ḥimyarites, l'un des termes pour dire « église » est *qls¹* qui peut être vocalisé « qalīs », mais non « qulays » ou « qullays » [1]. C'est donc la vocalisation al-Qalīs qui doit être préférée. On peut ajouter qu'elle reflète mieux le grec *ekklêsia* (prononcé alors « ekklisia »), « église », dont il dérive manifestement.

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* Ce monument a déjà fait l'objet de toute une série d'études et de tentatives de restitution : voir notamment Ronald Lewcock, « La cathédrale de Sanaa, foyer du christianisme en Arabie au VIe siècle », *Dossiers de l'Archéologie* 33 (1979), pp. 80-83 ; R. B. Serjeant & R. Lewcock « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣanʿāʾ and Ghumdān Castle », dans *Ṣanʿāʾ, an Arabian Islamic City*, ed. R.B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983, pp. 44-48 ; Barbara Finster & Jürgen Schmidt, « Die Kirche des Abraha in Ṣanʿāʾ », dans *Arabia Felix*, Beiträge zur Sprache und Kultur des vorislamischen Arabien, Festschrift Walter W. Müller zum 60. Geburtstag, herausgegeben von Norbert Nebes, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994, pp. 67-86 ; Paul Yule, *Spätantike im Jemen — Late Antique Yemen*, Aichwald: Linden Soft Verlag, 2007, pp. 107-111. Les sources arabes sont principalement al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka wa-mā jāʾa fī-hā min al-āthār*, éd. Rushdī al-Ṣāliḥ Malḥas, 2 vols., Makka: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1403 h./1983 (4e impression), pp. 137-141 ; Yāqūt, *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, herausgegeben Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, in Commission bei F. A. Brockhaus, 1924 (deuxième impression de l'édition de 1866-1873), « al-Qalīs » ; Abū Ṣāliḥ, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, attributed to Abû Ṣâliḥ, the Armenian, translated from the original Arabic by B. T. A. Evetts, with added notes by Alfred J. Butler, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895 (reprise 1969), pp. 300-302. Al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl* 2, texte, éd. Akwaʿ : *Kitāb al-Iklīl, al-juzʾ al-thānī*, éd. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ al-Ḥiwālī (al-Maktaba al-yamaniyya, 3), al-Qāhira: al-Sunna al-muḥammadiyya, 1386 h./1967, pp. 86-87 (sur la signification de ce texte, voir Christia Julien Robin, « Ḥimyar, des inscriptions aux traditions », *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005), pp. 10-11. L'ouvrage de Serjeant et Lewcock présente l'avantage de réunir de belles études faites sur le terrain et un inventaire très complet des données textuelles.

1 « Qulays » ou « qullays » seraient écrits **qlys¹* parce que les diphtongues sont notées, alors que les voyelles longues ne le sont pas (sauf en fin de mot).

al-Qalīs qui signifie « l'Église » est l'Église par excellence tout comme « la Digue » désigne la seule véritable digue, celle de Marib [2].

al-Qalīs était un monument remarquable par les dimensions et la qualité des matériaux et du décor. On racontait que son bâtisseur, Abraha, un roi ḥimyarite d'origine aksūmite qui régna de 535 à 565 environ, aurait dit :

> *« Aucune église semblable n'a (jamais) été construite pour un roi »* [3].

al-Qalīs aurait été détruite dans les années 750 ou peu après, au début du califat ʿabbāsside, soit deux siècles après sa construction et un peu plus d'un siècle après la conquête du Yémen par les musulmans [4].

Dans les études contemporaines, à la suite de Ronald Lewcock (1979), al-Qalīs est parfois qualifiée de « cathédrale ». Ce terme présente l'inconvénient d'appartenir à la tradition latine et d'impliquer la présence d'un évêque [5]. Nous lui préférons celui, plus neutre, de Grande Église.

La seconde église est mentionnée par al-Rāzī, l'historien de Ṣanʿāʾ, mort en 1068 (460 h.), d'après un informateur qui en aurait vu les vestiges vers l'an 1000 :

> *« Jésus fils de Marie entra à Ṣanʿāʾ et pria à l'emplacement de l'église ; les chrétiens aménagèrent (leur) église à Ṣanʿāʾ dans le lieu même où il pria. Cette église, de nos jours, est en ruine ; elle se trouve en bas de la ruelle des ferblantiers de Ṣanʿāʾ, au sud, vis-à-vis de la synagogue qui subsiste aujourd'hui à Ṣanʿāʾ. Il reste de cette église un angle en forme de colonnade* [Serjeant : *a corner like a column*] *au bout du chemin vers le marché des parfumeurs, et vers le quartier* [ou *la tour*] *de Damas. J'en ai aperçu de nombreux arcs qui étaient encore en place en l'année 390 (999-1000 è. chr.) »* [6].

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[2] La Digue de Maʾrib est appelée *ʿrm*ⁿ, arabe al-ʿArim, « la Digue », sans qu'il soit besoin d'ajouter un nom propre.

[3] *Kanīsa lam yubna mithlu-hā li-malik* (al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, I, p. 137).

[4] Selon al-Azraqī, la destruction d'al-Qalīs fut ordonnée par Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr (successeur de son frère Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ et deuxième calife ʿabbāsside qui régna de 754 à 775 [136-158 h.]). Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr en aurait chargé al-ʿAbbās b. al-Rabīʿ b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Ḥārithī. Yāqūt indique une date légèrement antérieure : à l'époque du calife Abū ʾl-Abbās al-Saffāḥ (*ilà zamān Abī ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ*), calife de 750 à 754.

[5] Pour désigner l'église d'Aksūm, le terme de « cathédrale » est également courant: voir par exemple Glen Bowersock, *The Throne of Adoulis. Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 12

[6] *Dakhala ʿĪsà b. Miryam /ṣ/ Ṣanʿāʾ, wa-ṣallà fī mawḍiʿ al-kanīsa fa-ʾttakhadha ʾl-naṣārà al-kanīsa bi-Ṣanʿāʾ ithr maṣallā-hu ; wa-hādhihi ʾl-kanīsa fī waqti-nā hādhā khariba wa-hiya asfal zuqāq al-mubayyiḍīn min Ṣanʿāʾ fī ʾl-jānib al-ʿadanī muḥādhiya li-bīʿat al-yahūd al-latī hiya al-yawm bāqiyat bi-Ṣanʿāʾ, wa-qad baqiya min hādhihi ʾl-kanīsa ḍabr shibh usṭuwān ʿalà ḥarf al-ṭarīq ilà sūq al-ʿaṭṭārīn, wa-ilà darb Dimashq, wa-qad adraktu ʿuqūd*ᵃⁿ *kathīra kānat bāqiya ilà sanat tisʿīn wa-thalathamiʾa* [al-Rāzī, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Ṣanʿāʾ, li-l-Rāzī*, t. 460 h./1068 m., ṭabʿa jadīda munaqqaḥa ulḥiqa bi-hā dhaylu-hu *Kitāb al-ikhtiṣāṣ li-l-ʿArashānī*, taḥqīq Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAmrī, Ṣanʿāʾ, 1981 (1401 h.) (deuxième impression ; première impression, 1974), p. 32]. L'informateur d'al-Rāzī est Ghassān b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Baṣrī d'après Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm, lui même d'après Abū Muḥammad. L'éditeur n'identifie

La localisation précise que donne al-Rāzī n'est plus compréhensible aujourd'hui. Il ne semble pas que l'église d'al-Rāzī soit la Grande Église d'Abraha, qui a été détruite plus tôt et dont la localisation semble différente [7].

Dans cette contribution, nous nous proposons de rouvrir le dossier d'al-Qalīs parce qu'un réexamen des sources permet de réviser les hypothèses précédemment avancées concernant sa localisation, ses dimensions et sa date, et d'en proposer de nouvelles.

L'emplacement d'al-Qalīs, à rechercher du côté de la Grande Mosquée

al-Qalīs a été localisée par les auteurs qui en ont traité dans la partie orientale de la ville de Ṣan'ā', à 175 m à l'ouest du mur de la citadelle de Qaṣr al-Silāḥ, au lieu-dit Ghurqat al-Qalīs, à savoir « la (fosse) inondée d'al-Qalīs », qui en aurait conservé le nom (voir le plan de Ṣan'ā', Fig. 1). Il y a là une sorte de cavité circulaire, médiocrement maçonnée, profonde de 2 m. Cette localisation, qui est celle des habitants de Ṣan'ā', remonte au moins au XIXe siècle [8]. Robert Serjeant et Ronald Lewcock ne l'ont pas remise en cause [9] parce que Ronald Lewcock, à qui on doit l'étude la plus fouillée sur le développement urbain de Ṣan'ā', pense que les constructions du quartier conservent l'empreinte d'un vaste édifice :

> *« The site, 175 m west of the wall of the citadel ... is identified by a large pit lined with coursed rubble masonry, 12,45 m in diameter north-west to south-east, and 14,65 m in diameter south-west to north-east. The irregular shape is partly due to its being given a roughly octogonal form on the north side. It seems fairly certain that this stonework is part of the foundation wall; as the platform of the church was 10* dhirā' *high, the original ground level could be nearly 5 m underground today, yet the original floor of the church would still have been above the present ground level. It seems quite possible that there was a crypt within the walls of the surviving octagon; this is particularly likely if the church was modelled on the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem ...*

pas ces personnages. Lire plutôt *ẓabr* (à la place de *ḍabr*) comme al-Rāzī, *Ta'rīkh Ṣan'ā'*, p. 208 (*mā bayna 'l-ṣakhrat al-Mulamlama al-latī fī ẓabr masjid Ṣan'ā' ...*). Le sunbstantif *ẓabr* signifie « pierre d'angle », d'où « angle, coin » (Moshe Piamenta, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*, Leiden: Brill, 2 parts, 1991, p. 293, *ḍubr, ḍibr*).

7 Robert Serjeant et Ronald Lewcock qui citent ce texte parviennent à la même conclusion [« The Church (al-Qalīs) », pp. 44-45].

8 Voir *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, IV, *Inscriptiones Ḥimyariticas et Sabaeas continens*, Paris (Imprimerie nationale), tomus I-III, 1899-1930, I, pp. 3-4 ; Tabulæ, I (en bas).

9 Serjeant et Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) », p. 44 B ; Robert Serjeant donne d'autant plus de crédit à cette hypothèse qu'un quartier de Ṣan'ā' se serait appelé al-Qalīs, comme le suggère l'expression « les pauvres d'al-Qalīs » qui apparaît dans une tradition rapportée par al-Rāzī (*Ta'rīkh Ṣan'ā'*, p. 109).

West of the open space in which this pit is situated is a block of houses with a curiously rectangular shape on the eastern, southern and western sides. It is particularly noticeable that the southern side of this block of houses is exactly on an east-west axis, and is slightly more than 10 m south of the east-west axis of the pit. This rectangular block has at its western and end (sic) *another open space entered by four streets from different directions. It seems possible that this is the original entrance square for the church.*

That this block of houses is built on the foundation walls of the main body of the church seems confirmed by the dimensions given in the description of the church. The length of the block is 55 m, and the houses end 5 m from the edge of the pit ; al-Azraqī gives the length of the nave and choir together as 80 plus 40 dhirāʿ, that is, 58 m without the wall thicknesses » [10].

En fait, les arguments archéologiques de Ronald Lewcock ne sont guère déterminants pour quiconque connaît quelque peu l'architecture antique. Les murs que l'on voit dans cette zone ne présentent aucun des caractères habituels des monuments préislamiques (assises de grands blocs réguliers, décrochement de l'assise supérieure par rapport à l'assise inférieure etc.) ; ceux qui peuvent être observés dans le trou sont particulièrement grossiers et irréguliers. Quant à l'orientation des murs, elle est la même dans tout le quartier [11].

Loin de prouver quoi que ce soit, l'observation archéologique semble plutôt défavorable à la localisation retenue. C'est pourquoi il importe de réexaminer les sources qui localisent al-Qalīs et de vérifier si elles s'accordent avec l'hypothèse de Ghurqat al-Qalīs.

La seule indication précise sur l'emplacement d'al-Qalīs se trouve chez al-Azraqī qui rapporte que la Grand Église a été édifiée à côté du palais royal de Ṣanʿāʾ, appelé Ghumdān :

« Abraha édifia alors al-Qalīs, une église, à Ṣanʿāʾ, à côté de Ghumdān ; il la réalisa avec soin et l'appela al-Qalīs » [12].

Ghumdān, qui est mentionné pour la première fois au début du IIIe s. è. chr., était devenu le siège du pouvoir ḥimyarite vers le milieu du VIe siècle. Comme c'était un symbole des anciennes monarchies sabéenne et ḥimyarite, les autorités musulmanes, à peine établies, se sont empressées de le détruire. Mais on ignore à quelle date précisément ; selon certains, ce serait sur l'ordre de ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (644-656), le troisième successeur de Muḥammad.

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10 Serjeant & Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) », p. 47 B.

11 Voir le plan de la partie orientale de Ṣanʿāʾ Fig. 1, d'après Serjeant & Lewcock, *Ṣanʿāʾ, an Arabian Islamic City*, pp. 140-141.

12 *Wa-banà Abraha ʿind dhālika 'l-Qalīs bi-Ṣanʿāʾ ilà janb Ghumdān kanīsa wa-aḥkama-hā wa-sammā-hā 'l-Qalīs* (al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, I, p. 137).

La généalogie de Ḥimyar composée par al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī (mort après 970, 360 h.) établit un lien entre al-Qalīs et Ghumdān :

> *« Ilī-Sharaḥ Yaḥḍub b. al-Ṣuwār ..., de la descendance de Ḥimyar le Jeune, engendra 'Amr Yan'ar dhū Ghumdān b. Ilī-Sharaḥ Yaḥḍub b. al-Ṣuwār — il ajoute : 'Amr Yan'ar fut le premier qui entreprit de surélever Ghumdān après sa première phase de construction —, et Watār b. Ilī-Sharaḥ d'après d'autres qu'Abī Naṣr — c'est ainsi qu'il (faut lire le nom qui) se trouve dans une inscription de Nā'iṭ.*
> *'Amr Yan'ar dhū Ghumdān b. Ilī-Sharaḥ Yaḥḍub engendra Shuraḥbīl b. 'Amr dhū Ghumdān.*
> *Shuraḥbīl b. 'Amr engendra Yāzil, Aḥdāq et al-Qalīs, trois hommes, fils de Shuraḥbīl b. 'Amr dhū Ghumdān b. Ilī-Sharaḥ Yaḥḍub, tous des clans. C'est d'al-Qalīs b. 'Amr que le château al-Qalīs à Ṣan'ā' tire son nom. C'est une construction ancienne, dont Aḥmad b. 'Īsà al-Radā'ī a célébré l'antiquité »* [13].

Mais il n'est pas possible de conclure qu'une telle reconstruction implique une proximité géographique des deux monuments.

On relève dans l'une des sources de Yāqūt, mort en 1229 (626 h.) une indication complémentaire qui situe al-Qalīs près de l'enceinte :

> *« J'ai vu écrit sur la porte d'al-Qalīs* [dans le texte *al-Qullays*], *qui est l'église que construisit Abraha à la porte de Ṣan'ā' ... »* [14].

Le point crucial est évidemment la localisation de Ghumdān. Or, deux hypothèses sont en concurrence. La première, qui se fonde sur les textes historiques, localise Ghumdān près de la Grande Mosquée (Fig. 1). C'est l'emplacement qu'indique explicitement al-Hamdānī dans le huitième volume de la *Couronne* (*al-Iklīl*) :

> *« (De Ghumdān), il subsiste, provenant de certains de ses murs, des blocs* (jurūb) *en face des portes de la Grande Mosquée à Ṣan'ā'. Après l'Islām, Ṣan'ā' se développa jusqu'aux années 290 de l'hégire* [903 de l'ère chrétienne et années suivantes] *quand (ces blocs) furent détruits »* [15].

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[13] Al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl* 2, pp. 86 / 9—87 / 4. Les vers d'al-Radā'ī sont cités dans al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifa* : *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-'Arab. al-Hamdânî's Geographie der arabischen Halbinsel*, éd. David Heinrich Müller, 2 vol., Leyde: Brill, 1884-1891 (reprise par le même éditeur, 1968), p. 240, lignes 17 et 21.

[14] *Ra'aytu maktūb*[an] *'alà bāb al-Qullays wa-hiya al-kanīsa al-latī banā-hā Abraha 'alà bāb Ṣan'ā'* ... (Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, entrée « al-Qalīs »).

[15] *Wa-baqiya min ba'ḍ ḥīṭāni-hi 'l-jurūb* [Fāris, *al-khurūb*] *al-muqābala li-abwāb al-Jāmi' bi-Ṣan'ā'. Thumma tazāyadat Ṣan'ā' fī 'l-islām ilà ba'ḍ wa-tis'īn wa-mi'atayn min al-hijra wa-khuribat* (al-Hazmdānī, *Iklīl* 8, texte Akwa', p. 36 ; texte Fāris, p. 5 ; traduction Fāris, p. 9).

La même indication est répétée un peu plus loin :

> *« Il subsiste encore, du mur de l'antique Ghumdān, un pan fait de blocs* (jurūb) *merveilleusement appareillés, en face de la première et de la seconde des portes orientales de la Grande Mosquée. Ce qui subsiste de Ghumdān forme une butte grande comme une montagne et nombre des habitations des Ṣanʿānites à l'entour ont été construites avec (des pierres) qui en proviennent. C'est sur cette butte que le Qarmate Ibn al-Faḍl s'est fortifié quand il entra à Ṣanʿā', parvint à la mosquée et régna sur Ṣanʿā', s'abattant sur son souverain et sur ses gens »* [16].

À l'époque d'al-Hamdānī, il est assuré que la Grande Mosquée actuelle existait déjà et jouait le rôle de mosquée cathédrale. On rapportait que, à l'époque de la conquête islamique, Muḥammad lui-même avait ordonné d'édifier une première mosquée à la place d'un jardin appartenant à Bādhān b. Sāsān, le gouverneur sāsānide (et le premier gouverneur islamique) de Ṣanʿā' [17], entre un rocher nommé al-Mulamlama et le palais de Ghumdān. On montre encore aujourd'hui l'emplacement d'al-Mulamlama à l'extérieur du mur occidental, dans la cour à ablutions ; quant à Ghumdān, on suppose que son emplacement correspond au monticule qui commence à quelques mètres à l'est de l'actuel mur oriental. La construction de cette première mosquée est attribuée soit à Wabr b. Yuḥannis al-Khuzāʿī soit, moins vraisemblablement, à Farwa b. Musayk al-Murādī, Abān b. Saʿīd ou Muhājir b. Umayya.

Un premier agrandissement aurait été effectué dans la partie nord, celle du mur de la *qibla* tourné vers Makka, par Ayyūb b. Yaḥyà al-Thaqafī, gouverneur du calife umayyade al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik (705-715). Il aurait entraîné la destruction du tombeau d'un prophète qui serait Ḥanẓala b. Ṣafwān [18]. Les

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16 *Wa-qad baqiya min ḥadd* [variante : *khadd*] *Ghumdān al-qadīm qiṭʿat dhāt jurūb mutalāḥika* [*talāḥikā*] *ʿajīb*^{an} *fa-hiya qibālat al-bāb al-awwal wa-'l-thānī min abwāb al-Jāmiʿ al-sharqiyya. wa-bāqī Ghumdān tall ʿaẓīm ka-'l-jabal wa-kathīr mimmā hawla-hu min manāzil al-Ṣanʿāniyyīn fa-min-hu buniyat* [Fāris : *bayt*] *wa-fī talli-hi taḥaṣṣana Ibn al-Faḍl al-Qarmaṭī yawm dakhala Ṣanʿā' fa-wāfā 'l-masjid wa-malaka Ṣanʿā' wa-'nqaḍḍa sulṭāna-hā wa-ahla-hā* (al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl* 8, texte Akwaʿ, pp. 47-48 ; texte Fāris, p. 12 ; traduction Fāris, p. 14).

17 Une liste des « gouverneurs du Yémen résidant à Ṣanʿā' » est reproduite dans Serjeant & Lewcock, *Ṣanʿā', an Arabian Islamic City*, pp. 53-54.

18 al-Rāzī, *Ta'rikh Ṣanʿā'*, pp. 205, 206, 210 ; Ronald Lewcock, G. Rex Smith, R. B. Serjeant & Paolo Costa, « The Architectural History and Description of Ṣanʿā' Mosques : The Great Mosque », dans *Ṣanʿā', an Arabian Islamic City*, p. 128 A, 132 A, 327 B, 345 B. On montre un ancien tombeau au nord du minaret occidental, qui n'est plus accessible aujourd'hui, et on prétend que ce serait celui du prophète Ḥanẓala b. Ṣafwān (Lewcock *et alii*, « The Architectural History and Description of Ṣanʿā' Mosques : The Great Mosque », dans *Ṣanʿā', an Arabian Islamic City*, p. 327 B). Il est douteux qu'il s'agisse du tombeau détruit à l'époque umayyade : il faudrait pour cela que ce tombeau se trouve au nord du mur septentrional primitif. Sur Ḥanẓala b. Ṣafwān, prophète préislamique associé à diverses légendes, voir Pellat, « Ḥanẓala b. Ṣafwān », dans *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, deuxième édition, III, 1975; noter l'association de ce prophète avec Coran XXII, [44] 45, verset

premières portes auraient été installées par 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Majīd al-'Adwī, délégué du premier gouverneur 'abbāsside qui avait été nommé par le calife al-Saffāḥ (750-754). Une inscription qui se trouve aujourd'hui dans la cour rapporte que le calife al-Mahdī (775-785) ordonna à son gouverneur 'Alī b. al-Rabī' d'entreprendre de travaux de réparation dans les mosquées de Ṣan'ā' [19].

Les premières données relativement précises remontent au IX^e^ siècle. La Grande Mosquée, détruite par une grave inondation en 875-876, est reconstruite par les Ya'furides Yu'fir et son fils Ibrahīm en 878-879. Elle est gravement endommagée quand le Qarmaṭe 'Alī b. al-Faḍl occupe Ṣan'ā' pour la seconde fois en 911-912, apparemment par une inondation qui atteint le plafond. On installe alors de nouvelles poutres, taillées dans le teck (*sāj*), mais on ignore s'il a fallu intervenir sur le bâtiment lui-même [20]. Quoi qu'il en soit, c'est cette mosquée qui est la Grande Mosquée d'al-Hamdānī.

La localisation de Ghumdān près de la Grande Mosquée est également mentionnée par Ibn Rusteh [21]. Elle est confirmée par al-Rāzī :

> *« Le Prophète de Dieu envoya Farwa b. Musayk au Yémen et lui ordonna de construire une mosquée à Ṣan'ā' dans le jardin de Bādhān qui est entre Ghumdān et le rocher al-Mulamlama »* [22].

Le même al-Rāzī donne quelques précisions supplémentaires : ce rocher, qu'on décrit rouge ou jaune, se trouvait à l'ouest de Ghumdān [23]. Quand au puits de Ghumdān, appelé Karāma, le premier que Noé aurait creusé après le déluge :

> *« Il se trouve dans Ghumdān à droite de la* qibla *de la Grande Mosquée juste en face »* [24].

dans lequel al-Hamdānī (*Iklīl* 8, éd. Fāris, p. 96 ; traduction, pp. 61-62 ; *Ṣifa*, texte, pp. 66 / 3 et 200 / 25) reconnaît une mention de Rayda, à une cinquantaine de kilomètres au nord de Ṣan'ā'. Selon Robert Serjeant, quatre autres tombeaux de Ḥanẓala b. Ṣafwān sont connus en Arabie, dont un au Ḥaḍramawt (Ronald Lewcock, Paolo Costa, R. B. Serjeant & Robert Wilson, « The Urban Development of Ṣan'ā' », dans *Ṣan'ā', an Arabian Islamic City*, p. 327, n. 1).

19 La liste des gouverneurs de Ṣan'ā' en fait un gouverneur d'al-Manṣūr (754-775) (Serjeant & Lewcock, *Ṣan'ā', an Arabian Islamic City*, p. 53). Mais l'inscription mentionne bien le calife al-Mahdī (Lewcock *et alii*, « The Architectural History and Description of Ṣan'ā' Mosques : The Great Mosque », dans *Ṣan'ā', an Arabian Islamic City*, p. 348 A).

20 Toutes les données sur la chronologie de la Grande Mosquée sont empruntées à Serjeant & Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣan'ā' and Ghumdān Castle ».

21 Ibn Rusteh, Abû Alî Ahmed ibn Omar Ibn Rusteh, *Kitāb al-A'lāq al-nafīsa VII*, éd. M. J. De Goeje (Bibliotheca geographum arabicorum VII), Leiden: Brill, 1892, pp. 109-113. Ibn Rusteh est un géographe persan qui se rendit dans le Ḥijāz en 903 et rédigea son ouvrage probablement après cette date (Lewcock *et alii*, « The Urban Development of Ṣan'ā' », p. 122).

22 al-Rāzī, *Ta'rīkh Ṣan'ā'*, p. 216 : *... yadhkuru anna rasūl Allāh /ṣ/ ba'atha Farwa b.* [texte imprimé *min*] *Musayk ilà 'l-Yaman wa-amara-hu an yabniya masjid*^an^ *bi-Ṣan'ā' fī bustān Bādhān fī-mā bayna Ghumdān wa-'l-ḥajar al-Mulamlama.* Voir aussi pp. 75, 76 et 216-217.

23 al-Rāzī, *Ta'rīkh Ṣan'ā'*, p. 212.

Ou encore :

> *« C'est au-dessus de la porte de ce puits qu'on plaça un nouvel arc ; cette porte te permettait de descendre de Ghumdān pour entrer dans la Grande Mosquée »* [25].

Ghumdān se trouvait donc tout près de la Grande Mosquée, vers l'est (Fig. 1). Cette conclusion s'accorde avec une dernière indication qu'on relève dans la chronique yéménite intitulée *Ghāyat al-amānī*, que son éditeur attribue à tort au Yéménite Yaḥyà Ibn al-Ḥusayn (mort en 1689) [26] :

> *« [ʿAlī b. al-Faḍl] se rendit alors à Ghumdān et à la grande mosquée »* [27].

De toutes ces informations, Robert Serjeant déduit logiquement que Ghumdān défendait l'ouest de Ṣanʿāʾ, tandis que les fortifications sur lesquelles le Qaṣr al-Silāḥ est construit protégeait l'est de la ville [28]. On peut sans doute ajouter que le « jardin de Bādhān » se trouvait probablement à l'extérieur de l'enceinte.

La seconde localisation de Ghumdān est fort différente. Les habitants de Ṣanʿāʾ sont convaincus que l'ancien palais royal occupait l'emplacement de l'actuel Qaṣr al-Silāḥ, la citadelle formant une saillie dans la muraille orientale de la ville (Fig. 1)[29]. Même si cette conjecture, qui se fonde sur le relief, n'est pas absurde a priori, elle peut être écartée sans hésiter parce qu'elle ne s'accorde pas avec les indications d'al-Hamdānī.

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24 al-Rāzī, *Taʾrīkh Ṣanʿāʾ*, p. 218, *hiya fī Ghumdān ʿalà yamīn qiblat masjid al-Jāmiʿ bi-ḥidhāʾi-hā sawāʾ* (voir aussi p. 221). Le nom Karāma est donné p. 219.

25 al-Rāzī, *Taʾrīkh Ṣanʿāʾ*, p. 221, *wa-hiya al-biʾr al-latī aṣlaḥa ʿalay-hā ʿiqd jadīd ʿalà bābi-hā idhā nazalta min Ghumdān turīdu tadkhulu ilà masjid al-Jāmiʿ*.

26 Voir G. Rex Smith, « The Ṭāhirid sultans of the Yemen (858-923 / 1454-1517) and their historian Ibn al-Daybaʿ », *Journal of Semitic Studies* XXIX (1984), p. 149.

27 *Fa-qaṣada Ghumdān wa-ʾl-masjid al-jāmiʿ* (Ibn al-Ḥusayn, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-Yamānī*, 2 vols, éd. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr et Muḥammad Muṣṭafà Ziyāda, al-Qāhira: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿarabī, 1968, p. 196).

28 Serjeant & Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣanʿāʾ and Ghumdān Castle », p. 44 B. Ailleurs dans le même volume, c'est une hypothèse quelque peu différente qui est retenue : Ghumdān serait la défense du *sūq* ; en outre, il est supposé que, dès avant l'Islam, la ville s'étendait déjà plus à l'ouest (Lewcock *et alii*, « The Urban Development of Ṣanʿāʾ », p. 132).

29 Serjeant & Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣanʿāʾ and Ghumdān Castle », p. 44 ; c'était déjà l'opinion de Glaser à la fin du XIXe s. (voir le croquis reproduit par *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, IV, Tomus I, p. 4). Dans Lewcock *et alii*, « The Urban Development of Ṣanʿāʾ », le Qaṣr al-Ṣilāḥ, correctement dénommé dans la légende des illustrations p. 124 (10.1, 10.2 et 10.3), est appelé par erreur « Qaṣr al-Qalīs » dans le titre du paragraphe, p. 123 A : ce malheureux lapsus, qui trahit l'adhésion des auteurs à la localisation traditionnelle d'al-Qalīs, est évidemment source de confusion. Noter par ailleurs que les gros blocs de calcaire, protubérants et grossièrement taillés, que l'on prenait, dans les années 1970, pour un appareil antique sont datés maintenant beaucoup plus tard.

Or c'est certainement l'identification de Ghumdān avec le Qaṣr al-Silāḥ qui a conduit les Ṣanʿānites à situer al-Qalīs au lieu-dit Ghurqat al-Qalīs, relativement proche du Qaṣr al-Silāḥ, parce que, selon al-Azraqī, al-Qalīs était à côté de Ghumdān.

Je suspecte donc Ghurqat al-Qalīs de ne pas être un toponyme ancien, conservant le souvenir d'al-Qalīs, mais plutôt le résultat d'une reconstruction savante. On peut aisément supposer que des Ṣanʿānites à une époque relativement récente ont cherché à retrouver la trace d'al-Qalīs pour satisfaire soit leur propre curiosité soit celle de leurs visiteurs et qu'ils ont jeté leur dévolu sur les vestiges étranges de Ghurqat al-Qalīs.

Un cas comparable de reconstruction savante est attesté à Rayda, à une cinquantaine de kilomètres au nord de Ṣanʿā' [30]. Il peut être aisément débusqué à cause d'une appellation fautive qui provient d'une erreur de lecture. Les habitants de Rayda sont fiers de pouvoir montrer aux visiteurs l'ancien palais princier des banū Su'rān, qu'ils appellent « Tulqum ». On pourrait croire que le nom de ce palais a été conservé et transmis par les Raydites de génération en génération depuis des temps très anciens. Il n'en est rien. Le palais des banū Su'rān s'appelait en fait Tulfum [31]. Le *f* du nom initial est donc devenu un *q* aujourd'hui. Il n'existe aucun exemple de remplacement du *f* par un *q* dans les langues parlées au Yémen. En revanche un tel remplacement est fréquent dans les manuscrits parce que le *f* (lettre arabe en forme de boucle, avec un point diacritique au-dessus) est souvent confondu avec le *q* (lettre arabe également en forme de boucle, mais avec deux points diacritiques au-dessus). Il est donc évident que le nom a été réintroduit à partie d'une source écrite dans laquelle une erreur scribale avait remplacé « Tulfum » par « Tulqum ».

De même peut-on supposer que les « idoles » dessinées par Doughty à al-Ṭā'if, notamment celle d'Allāt, n'ont rien d'antique et que ce sont de simples rochers choisis pour répondre à la curiosité des voyageurs à la recherche du temple d'Allāt [32].

Revenons à la localisation d'al-Qalīs. Si l'indication d'al-Azraqī est bien exacte, la Grande Église d'Abraha jouxtait le palais Ghumdān. On sait que la Grande Mosquée a été construite près du même palais. Il en résulte qu'al-Qalīs se trouvait

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30 Cette bourgade a déjà été évoquée n. 18.

31 On le sait grâce à al-Hamdānī qui indique qu'on prononçait soit « Tulfum » soit « Tulthum » [voir déjà Christian Robin *Les Hautes-Terres du Nord-Yémen avant l'islam* (Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul, L), 2 vols., Istanbul : Nederlands Historisch-archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1982, II, pp. 35-37].

32 Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, With an Introduction by T. E. Lawrence, 2 vols., New York: Dover Publications, 1979 (reproduction intégrale de la version définitive de la troisième édition de 1936 par Jonathan Cape), II, pp. 549-550.

dans la zone de la Grande Mosquée et que le Ghurqat al-Qalīs qui se trouve à quelque 400 m en direction de l'est n'en est pas un vestige [33].

La Grande Église d'Abraha était un monument de grandes dimensions, au centre d'une vaste esplanade, comme nous allons le voir. Il apparaît plausible que, comme la Grande Mosquée, elle a été édifiée en dehors de l'enceinte pour pouvoir disposer de l'espace nécessaire. Cette hypothèse s'accorde avec le désir d'Abraha d'en faire un lieu de pèlerinage pour toute l'Arabie, puisque ce type de sanctuaire, pour rester accessible à tous et en tout temps, ne peut pas être situé derrière une muraille [34].

Si nous additionnons tous les indices (sans doute de valeur inégale) qui ont été réunis, al-Qalīs a été édifiée près de Ghumdān, qui constituait sans doute une forteresse défendant l'ouest de la ville, non loin d'une porte et sans doute en dehors de l'enceinte.

Si al-Qalīs et la Grande Mosquée sont construites à l'ouest de Ghumdān, en dehors de l'enceinte, il reste à se demander comment l'une se situe par rapport à l'autre. De manière très hypothétique, al-Qalīs pourrait être au nord et la Grande Mosquée au sud.

Cette supposition repose sur la tradition quelque peu énigmatique, déjà évoquée, selon laquelle il a fallu détruire le tombeau d'un prophète, Ḥanẓala b. Ṣafwān, quand on reconstruisit le mur de la *qibla,* c'est-à-dire le mur septentrional de la Grande Mosquée, à l'époque umayyade. Si cette tradition a un fondement historique, je retiendrais qu'un antique tombeau, objet de vénération populaire, était devenu encombrant et qu'on souhaitait s'en débarrasser. Or, quand Abraha a édifié al-Qalīs avec l'objectif d'en faire l'un des grands pèlerinages de l'Arabie, sans doute sur le modèle de Sergiopolis ou de Saint-Siméon en Syrie, il l'a vraisemblablement placée sous le patronage d'un saint très vénéré. Il fallait donc qu'al-Qalīs abrite des reliques ou, encore mieux, le tombeau de ce saint. Après les massacres de 522-525, les candidats potentiels ne manquaient pas. Au premier rang, il y avait bien évidemment al-Ḥārith b. Kaʿb, qui présentait l'avantage d'être un Arabe (de la tribu de Madhḥij), mais encore fallait-il que les gens de Najrān veuillent bien s'en séparer.

Si al-Qalīs a bien abrité le tombeau d'un saint, ce tombeau a dû être placé sous la coupole (comme le tombeau de Jésus dans le Saint-Sépulcre à Jérusalem), moins vraisemblablement au centre de l'*īwān* (comme la Pierre noire de Makka). Ce pourrait être ce tombeau vénéré qui a été détruit lors de l'agrandissement

[33] Il est étrange que Robert Serjeant et Ronald Lewcock, qui localisent Ghumdān près de la Grande Mosquée et connaissent le texte d'al-Azraqī, traduit et analysé dans leur ouvrage, maintiennent la localisation de la Grande Église d'Abraha à Ghurqat al-Qalīs.

[34] Avant l'Islam, les grands temples des royaumes préislamiques, en totalité ou presque, sont situés à l'extérieur des villes, protégés par leur seule sainteté.

d'époque umayyade, qui a amené à déplacer le mur de la *qibla* vers le nord. Il en résulte qu'al-Qalīs devait se trouver au nord de la Grande Mosquée.

Le fait que la tradition islamique attribue le tombeau à un prophète pré-islamique ne fait pas vraiment difficulté : les exemples d'islamisation de saints antérieurs sont innombrables.

On trouve peut-être une confirmation du fait que la Grande Mosquée de Ṣan'ā' a été édifiée contre al-Qalīs dans le fait que tous les blocs sculptés provenant d'al-Qalīs, notamment les chapiteaux avec des croix (Fig. 2), ont été retrouvés dans la seule Grande Mosquée ; par ailleurs, les sources retiennent que d'importants aménagement ont été réalisés dans la Grande Mosquée au début de l'époque 'abbāsside, à l'époque même où al-Qalīs était détruite.

Nous supposons donc que la première mosquée de Ṣan'ā' aurait été construite sur l'esplanade d'al-Qalīs avant de prendre progressivement sa place. Cette reconstruction se heurte sans doute à l'objection qu'aucune source ne mentionne un lien direct entre al-Qalīs et la Grande Mosquée. Ce silence s'explique peut-être par le fait qu'il s'agissait d'un sujet sensible : il suffit de se reporter à al-Hamdānī qui falsifie le passé d'al-Qalīs (parfaitement connu comme le montre al-Azraqī) en en faisant un palais [35].

Les dimensions d'al-Qalīs

al-Azraqī rapporte qu'al-Qalīs se composait d'un alignement de trois édifices disposés l'un derrière l'autre, qu'il désigne par les termes *bayt*, *īwān* et *qubba*. Le premier, le *bayt*, substantif qui signifie « habitation, maison ou palais », pourrait désigner une nef ou un vestibule. Le deuxième, l'*īwān*, nomme apparemment une grande salle (ou une cour) dont le pourtour est constitué de grands arcs donnant accès à de vastes cellules (dont le sol est en général plus haut que celui de l'espace central). Quant au troisième, la *qubba*, c'est une coupole. Pour éviter d'orienter a priori vers une interprétation ou une autre, il a semblé préférable de désigner chacun de ces édifices par le nom qu'il porte en arabe.

De manière quelque peu inattendue, al-Azraqī prétend aussi que « (al-Qalīs) était carrée, avec des côtés égaux » [36]. Dans sa description, un seul des trois édifices est certainement carré : la *qubba*. La forme de l'*īwān* est incertaine. Quant

35 Voir ci-dessus, p. 109 ; Lewcock *et alii*, « The Urban Development of Ṣan'ā' », p. 123 B ; Robin, « Ḥimyar, des inscriptions aux traditions », pp. 10-11. Le savant yéménite Nashwān al-Ḥimyarī (mort vers 1178), après avoir repris la même fable, ajoute, pour se rapprocher de la vérité : « Abraha l'Abyssin l'habita après cela » [*Die auf Südarabien bezüglichen Angaben Našwān's im Šams al-'ulūm*, gesammelt, alphabetisch geordnet und herausgegeben von 'Aẓīmuddīn Aḥmad ("E. J. W. Gibb Memorial" series, XXIV), Leyden - London : E.J. Brill - Luzac, 1916, p. 88 / 19-20].

36 *... wa-anna-hu kāna murabba'an mustawī 'l-tarbī'* (al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, I, p. 138).

au *bayt*, il est rectangulaire. L'ensemble, en tout cas, ne peut pas être carré. Faut-il supposer que le qualificatif « carré » ne s'applique qu'à la partie la plus importante d'al-Qalīs ?

Si on retient cette supposition, il reste à identifier l'édifice qui serait considéré comme le cœur d'al-Qalīs. Le décor n'est pas un argument puisque les trois édifices sont tous richement ornés. En revanche la localisation de la chaire (*minbar*) d'ébène, qui se trouve dans la *qubba*[37], peut être un indice. De cette chaire, le prédicateur s'adressait aux fidèles. Il est peu vraisemblable que ces fidèles, pendant les offices, se tenaient dans la *qubba* : cet édifice, de dimensions relativement modestes (30 coudées sur 30), abritait vraisemblablement les reliques ou le tombeau du saint, comme le suggère la splendeur de sa couverture, une grande dalle d'albâtre de 10 coudées sur 10. L'*īwān* est le meilleur candidat puisque le *bayt* est trop éloigné de la chaire. L'édifice « carré » qui constituait al-Qalīs serait donc *l'īwān*.

Dans sa description d'al-Qalīs, al-Azraqī donne un grand nombre de dimensions, toujours exprimées en coudées (*dhirā'*). Les plus significatives pour visualiser le bâtiment sont :

- la hauteur de l'édifice : 60 coudées (*dhirā'*) ;
- la hauteur du socle : 10 coudées ;
- la distance entre le mur d'enceinte et al-Qalīs : 200 coudées ;
- les dimensions du *bayt* : 80 coudées sur 40 ;
- les dimensions de l'*iwān* qui se situe entre le *bayt* et la *qubba* : 40 coudées à droite et 40 coudées à gauche ;
- les dimensions de la *qubba* : 30 coudées sur 30[38].

Les dimensions au sol du bâtiment présentent une incertitude à cause des imprécisions du texte à propos de l'*iwān* :

> *« Ensuite, on passait du* bayt *à un* īwān *dont la dimension était de 40 coudées depuis la droite et depuis la gauche, et dont les arcs étaient plaqués de mosaïques arborées avec, entre les ouvertures, de voyantes étoiles d'or. Ensuite on passait de l'*īwān *à une* qubba *de 30 coudées sur 30 »*[39].

[37] al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, p. 139.

[38] al-Azraqī indique encore : hauteur du mur de *jarūb* sur la façade, 20 coudées ; hauteur de la frise, 2 coudées ; saillie de la frise, 1 coudée ; épaisseur du mur, 6 coudées ; dimensions de la porte, 4 coudées sur 10 ; dimensions de la dalle d'albâtre au sommet de la coupole, 10 coudées sur 10 ; longueur des deux poutres « Ku'ayb » et « la femme de Ku'ayb », 60 coudées.

[39] *Thumma yudkhalu min al-bayt ilà īwān ṭawlu-hu arba'ūna dhirā'an 'an yamīni-hi wa-'an yasāri-hi, wa-'uqūdu-hu maḍrūba bi-'l-fusayfisā' mushajjara bayna aḍ'āfi-hā kawākib al-dhahab ẓāhira thumma yudkhalu min al-īwān ilà qubba ...* (al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, p. 139).

Le terme *īwān* peut désigner des édifices très divers, qui ont en commun de comporter un vaste espace libre au centre, de forme carrée ou rectangulaire, entouré par des arcs qui donnent accès à des pièces périphériques. Les précédentes restitutions ont imaginé une pièce couverte de 40 coudées sur 40 [40] ou de 40 coudées de longueur sur 80 de largeur [41]. Après en avoir discuté avec Christian Darles, je proposerais une restitution différente, ou plutôt deux, fondées sur l'hypothèse (développée ci-dessus) selon laquelle l'*īwān* était de forme carrée. Si on comprend que les 40 coudées mentionnées par al-Azraqī donnent la mesure de l'*īwān* à droite et à gauche par rapport à l'axe central du *bayt*, dans ce cas l'*īwān* est un édifice carré mesurant 80 coudées sur 80 ; ce peut être une pièce couverte, mais il est plus vraisemblable d'imaginer une cour entourée de galeries.
Si les 40 coudées donnent la mesure du débordement de *l'īwān* à droite et à gauche, par rapport aux parois externes du *bayt*, l'*īwān* est alors une vaste cour entourée de galeries, faisant 120 coudées sur 120. Si on retient cette dernière hypothèse (qui s'accorde avec la longueur cumulée des deux poutres « Ku'ayb » et « la femme de Ku'ayb », n. 38), les dimensions au sol de la Grande Église de Ṣan'ā' étaient de 230 coudées sur 120 [42].

Ces dimensions au sol dépassent nettement celles retenues par Robert Serjeant et Ronald Lewcock (150 coudées sur 40) et par Barbara Finster et Jürgen Schmidt (150 coudées sur 80 coudées). Selon Robert Serjeant et Ronald Lewcock, la coudée utilisée par al-Azraqī serait celle des 'Abbāssides qui mesurait 0,4825 m, nombre qui peut être arrondi à 0,50 m [43]. D'après leurs calculs, le bâtiment aurait donc atteint 75 m sur 40. La hauteur totale aurait été de 35 m et l'épaisseur des murs de 3 m. Ces nombres paraissent élevés pour un bâtiment couvert et on peut se demander si les traditionnistes ne les ont pas gonflés [44]. Il suffit de les comparer avec les dimensions de la Grande Mosquée de Ṣan'ā' qui mesure 78 m sur 66 au sol, sur une hauteur inférieure à 10 m, avec une vaste cour au centre de l'édifice [45].

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40 Serjeant & Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣan'ā' and Ghumdān Castle », fig. 6.1, p. 46 A.

41 Finster et Schmidt, « Die Kirche des Abraha in Ṣan'ā' », pp. 83 et 84.

42 Longueur, 80 + 120 + 30 = 230 coudées ; largeur, 120 coudées au niveau de l'*īwān*, 40 au niveau du *bayt*, 30 au niveau de la *qubba*.

43 Serjeant et Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣan'ā' and Ghumdān Castle », p. 48.

44 Serjeant et Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣan'ā' and Ghumdān Castle », p. 45, n. 22 et 23, à propos de la hauteur et de l'ampleur de l'esplanade.

45 Pour une vue d'ensemble , voir notamment Paolo Costa, « La Moschea Grande di Ṣan'ā' », *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 34 (N.S. XXIV) (1974), pp. 487-506 et pl. I-XXX, plus un plan hors-texte, et Lewcock *et alii*, « The Architectural History and Description of Ṣan'ā' Mosques » ; Lewcock *et alii*, « The Urban Development of Ṣan'ā' », pp. 325 et 335. Notre-Dame de Paris, pour donner une comparaison plus exotique, mesure au sol 127 m sur 48 ; la seule nef mesure 60 m sur 13 (sans les collatéraux ; avec eux, 24,80 m) ; la hauteur de la nef est, sous la voute, de 33 m

En fait, il faut sans doute donner à la coudée mentionnée par al-Azraqī une longueur inférieure à celle qui a été proposée. Si on se reporte aux dimensions de la Ka'ba données par le même Azraqī [46], les nombres (toujours en coudées) paraissent également exagérés. Initialement, alors que Muḥammad était encore un jeune homme, la Ka'ba était un simple enclos, désigné par le terme de *'arīsh* (comme le Tabernacle des Enfants d'Israël lors de leur traversée du désert) [47]. Le mur de cet enclos n'était pas bien élevé puisque les animaux pouvaient le franchir [48]. Cette première Ka'ba, détruite par l'incendie que les fumigations d'encens d'une vieille femme avaient provoqué [49], fut remplacée, vers 600 [50], par une véritable construction, plus élevée et munie d'une couverture [51]. Selon al-Azraqī,

> *« ils portèrent sa hauteur extérieure, du sol au sommet, à 18 coudées* (dhirā')*, alors que, auparavant, elle était de 9 coudées. Quraysh ajouta donc à sa hauteur en partie supérieure neuf autre coudées »* [52].

La hauteur du mur avant la rénovation était donc de 9 coudées, soit 4,5 m si on donne à la coudée une longueur de 0,50 m. On imagine mal que les chèvres des Mecquois aient pu sauter par dessus un mur d'une telle hauteur. D'ailleurs, d'autres traditions donnent à ce mur une « hauteur d'homme » [53].

Malheureusement, la hauteur de la Ka'ba actuelle n'est pas celle de la Ka'ba après la rénovation de *c.* 600. L'édifice, détruit lors d'un siège de Makka en 683, a été reconstruit par 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Zubayr, avec diverses innovations que Muḥammad auraient souhaitées ; la hauteur serait alors passée à 27 coudées. La Ka'ba a encore été remaniée une dizaine d'années plus tard, en 693, quand al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf reprit Makka, tua Ibn al-Zubayr et rétablit l'autorité des

et, sous le toit, de 43 m. La Grande Église de Ṣan'ā' aurait donc eu des dimensions assez comparables à celle de la nef de Notre-Dame.

46 al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, pp. 164-165 ; traduction de Geoffrey King « The paintings of the Pre-Islamic Ka'ba », *Muqarnas* 21 (2004), pp. 219-220 (*Essays in Honor of J. M. Rogers*).

47 Uri Rubin, « The Ka'ba : Aspects of its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times », *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1986), pp. 97-131 (reprise dans F. E. Peters (éd.), *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam* (The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, 3), Aldershot-Brookfield USA-Singapore-Sydney: Ashgate, Variorum, 1999, pp. 98-99.

48 Ma'mar b. Rāshid (mort en 770) cité par Rubin, « The Ka'ba », pp. 100-101 et n. 14 ; voir aussi Ibn Jurayj (mort en 767), paraphrasé p. 98.

49 A. J. Wensinck, « Ka'ba », dans *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Nouvelle édition, IV, 1978, p. 331.

50 Selon les sources, entre cinq et quinze ans avant la première révélation.

51 Rubin, « The Ka'ba », p. 101, n. 16.

52 *Wa-ja'alū irtifā'a-hā min khāriji-hā min al-arḍ ilà a'lā-hā thamāniyat 'ashar dhirā'an wa-kānat qabla dhālika tis'at adhru' fa-zādat Quraysh fī irtifā'i-hā fī 'l-samā' tis'at adhru' ukhar* (al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, p.164).

53 Wensinck, « Ka'ba », p. 333.

Umayyades sur les Lieux-saints ; lors des travaux qu'al-Ḥajjāj fit exécuter, elle aurait retrouvé son aspect préislamique, conservé depuis lors. La hauteur de la Ka'ba actuelle est de l'ordre de 15 m, avec une porte s'ouvrant à 2 m au-dessus du sol [54].

Si on donne à la coudée une longueur de 0,50 m, les nombres donnés par al-Azraqī sont manifestement exagérés. Ils peuvent s'expliquer par le manque d'esprit critique ou par le désir de surprendre de ce savant. Il est également possible qu'ils proviennent de la source utilisée. Mais une autre explication me paraît envisageable. La coudée (*dhirā'*) d'al-Azraqī pourrait être beaucoup plus courte qu'on ne le croit.

À l'époque islamique, on sait que le *dhirā'* a varié : sa longueur, initialement de 0,5406 m, a oscillé ensuite entre 0,48 et 0,83 m, dépassant même parfois le mètre. En principe, ce *dhirā'* se divise en six largeurs de main (*qabḍa*) et il faut quatre *dhirā'* pour obtenir une toise (*bā'* ou *qāma*) ou une canne (*qaṣaba*) [55].

Avant l'Islam, la mesure de longueur utilisée par Ḥimyar (puissance qui domina de 350 à 565 l'Arabie centrale et occidentale) ne s'appelle pas *dhirā'*, mais *amat*, terme d'origine mésopotamienne qui a le même sens, celui d'avant-bras (du coude jusqu'à l'extrémité de la main, comme « coudée » et « aune »). Sur la Digue de Ma'rib, la longueur de la *amat* a pu être évaluée à 0,32 ou 0,33 cm [56]. Il est possible que ce soit cette unité qu'al-Azraqī utilise, soit qu'il cite une source ancienne dans laquelle le terme *amat* aurait été simplement remplacé par *dhirā'* soit que l'unité ḥimyarite soit restée en usage jusqu'aux premiers siècles de l'Islam en Arabie occidentale. S'il en allait ainsi, les dimensions d'al-Qalīs seraient plus modestes. Je résume les diverses hypothèses.

Dimensions de la Grande Église de Ṣan'ā' :

— Coudée de 0,50 m
Robert Serjeant et Ronald Lewcock
Au sol : 75 m sur 20
Hauteur : 35 m
Barbara Finster et Jürgen Schmidt
Au sol : 65 ou 75 m sur 20 (*bayt*) et 40 (*īwān*)
Hauteur : 35 m

54 Wensinck, « Ka'ba », pp. 331-333.

55 Hinz, « Dhirā' », dans *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, nouvelle édition, II, 1977, pp. 238-239.

56 Christian Darles, Christian Julien Robin et Jérémie Schiettecatte, avec une contribution de Ghassan el Masri, « Contribution à une meilleure compréhension de l'histoire de la Digue de Ma'rib au Yémen », dans *Regards croisés d'Orient et d'Occident. Les barrages dans l'Antiquité tardive*, Actes du colloque tenu à Paris, Fondation Simone et Cino del Duca, 7-8 janvier 2011, organisé dans le cadre du programme ANR EauMaghreb (Orient & Méditerranée 14), édd. François Baratte, Christian Julien Robin et Elsa Rocca, Paris: De Boccard, 2014, pp. 20-24.

— Coudée de 0,33 m
Robert Serjeant et Ronald Lewcock
Au sol : 50 m sur 13
Hauteur : 23 m
Barbara Finster et Jürgen Schmidt
Au sol : 43 ou 50 m sur 13 (*bayt*) et 26 (*īwān*)
Hauteur : 23 m
Selon notre hypothèse
Au sol : 76 m sur 40 (*īwān*) et 13 (*bayt*) (ou 63 m sur 26 et 13)
Hauteur : 23 m
Dimensions de la Grande Mosquée de Ṣanʿāʾ
Au sol : 78 m sur 66
Hauteur : 10 m.

Après les dimensions au sol de la Grande Église, il reste à examiner celles de l'esplanade. Selon al-Azraqī,

> *« Tout autour (d'al-Qalīs), il y avait un mur ; entre lui et al-Qalīs (la distance était de) 200 coudées ; il l'entourait de tout côté »* [57].

Robert Serjeant qui traduit : « Around it was a wall with 200 *dhirāʿ* between it and al-Qalīs, surrounding it on every side », suppose de même qu'al-Qalīs se trouvait au centre d'une esplanade, à une distance de 200 coudées du mur de gauche et à une distance identique du mur de droite ; la largeur de l'esplanade aurait donc été, selon al-Azraqī, de 400 coudées (soit 200 m ou 133 selon la longueur que l'on donne à la coudée), plus la largeur d'al-Qalīs. Mais Robert Serjeant observe en note : « This figure also looks exaggerated ; a figure of 200 *dhirāʿ* for the total distance from wall to wall would be easier » [58].

Même s'il est difficile de savoir dans quelle mesure les dimensions données par al-Azraqī sont fiables, elles impliquent assurément qu'al-Qalīs était un édifice très vaste. Ces conclusions s'accordent avec l'hypothèse qu'al-Qalīs se trouvait à l'extérieur de l'enceinte de la ville, à peu près à l'emplacement de la Grande Mosquée, plus précisément sous son aile septentrionale et plus au nord.

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57 *Wa-ḥawla-hu sūr bayna-hu wa-bayna 'l-Qalīs miʾatā dhirāʿ muṭayyif bi-hi min kull jānib* (al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, p. 138).

58 Serjeant & Lewcock, « The Church (al-Qalīs) of Ṣanʿāʾ and Ghumdān Castle », p. 45 et n. 23.

La date d'al-Qalīs

Les traditionnistes arabo-musulmans attribuent unanimement la construction d'al-Qalīs à Abraha, un Aksūmite qui a usurpé le trône de Ḥimyar peu de temps après 531, en renversant le souverain ḥimyarite choisi par le négus Kālēb. Les inscriptions qu'Abraha a composées ou qui mentionnent ce roi s'étagent entre février 548 et novembre 558. Le règne d'Abraha semble s'achever quelques années après 558. La tradition arabo-islamique rapporte qu'il est mort, probablement frappé par un mal épidémique, après l'échec d'une expédition visant à détruire le Temple de Makka.

La date précise de la construction d'al-Qalīs n'est pas indiquée par ces sources. Elle est probablement postérieure à 548 pour deux raisons. La première est que cette construction n'est pas mentionnée dans l'inscription Sadd Ma'rib 5 = *CIH* 541 qui énumère les diverses réussites du règne pour les onze mois des années 547 et 548 pendant lesquels Abraha était en campagne dans le Yémen oriental ; elle n'est donc pas entreprise pendant cette période et n'est probablement pas antérieure puisque le régime d'Abraha n'était pas encore stabilisé [59]. La seconde raison est qu'elle doit être postérieure à la réconciliation entre Abraha et l'empereur byzantin Justinien (527-565) si on se fonde sur le fait qu'Abraha sollicita et obtint l'aide de l'empereur qui fournit des ouvriers spécialisés pour la décoration [60] ; or cette réconciliation est certainement postérieure à la mort (de date incertaine) du négus Kālēb contre lequel Abraha s'était révolté [61] et probablement postérieure à la stabilisation du régime d'Abraha en 548 et à la reconquête de l'Arabie déserte en 552-553 [62].

Une date plus précise pour la construction d'al-Qalīs peut cependant être proposée, en s'appuyant sur une inscription négligée jusqu'ici. Elle est sans doute hypothétique, mais apparaît très plausible puisqu'elle s'accorde parfaitement avec les autres données. L'inscription ḥimyarite dont il s'agit est conservée aujourd'hui au Musée d'Istanbul. Elle est connue comme l'inscription datée la

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59 Christian Julien Robin, « Abraha et la reconquête de l'Arabie déserte : un réexamen de l'inscription Ryckmans 506 = Murayghān 1 », *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 39 (2012), pp. 1-93.

60 al-Ṭabarī, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed Ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, M. J. De Goeje, éd. Prima series, II, recensuerunt J. Barth et Th. Nöldeke, Leiden: Brill, 1964 (reproduction photomécanique), I, p. 935 [*The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. V, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lak(h)mids, and Yemen*, translated by C. E. Bosworth (Bibliotheca Persica), New York : State University of New York Press, 1999, V, pp. 220-221] : « (César) lui prêta assistance (en lui envoyant) des artisans, des mosaïques et du marbre » (*fa-a'āna-hu bi-'l-ṣannā' wa-'l-fusayfusa' wa-'l-rukhām*).

61 Robin, « Abraha et la reconquête de l'Arabie déserte », pp. 72-73.

62 Christian Julien Robin & Sālim Ṭayrān, « Soixante-dix ans avant l'Islam, l'Arabie toute entière dominée par un roi chrétien », *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes rendus de l'année* 2012, pp. 525-553.

plus récente (669 de l'ère ḥimyarite, soit 559-560 de l'ère chrétienne). Remarquablement soignée, elle commémore la construction d'un monument splendide, pour lequel des matériaux précieux sont utilisés :

CIH 325 = Ist 7509 (Fig. 3)

Bibliographie : *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, IV ; Walter W. Müller, « CIH 325 : die jüngste datierte sabäische Inschrift », dans Études sud-arabes. Recueil offert à Jacques Ryckmans (Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain, 39), Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, 1991, pp. 117-131; Walter W. Müller, *Sabäische Inschriften nach Ären datiert. Bibliographie, Texte und Glossar* (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur – Mainz, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission, 53), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010, pp. 122-123.

Le texte est divisé en trois registres de même ampleur : lignes 1-3, 4-6 et 7-9.

1 *... g]rb^{m} w-rb‘t^{m} mwgl^{m} w-ftẖ^{m}[...*
2 *...]ṣlt-hw ḏ-s^{1}n ms^{3}wd^{n} ‘ly^{n} w-wz’w ‘ḏb[...*
3 *... mḥ]wl^{m} ḡyr-mw tfr‘-hw w-hw‘bw kl qh yr[...*
4 *...]ḏ-s^{1}n s^{1}k^{m} w-‘ḏb-hw bn mwṯr-hw ‘dy tfr‘-hw w-[...*
5 *...]m b-ẖrf^{n} ḏ-l-ts^{1}‘t w-s^{1}ṯy w-s^{1}ṯ m’t^{m} w-wz’w[‘ḏb ...*
6 *...]w-Hnwm ’rb‘t fls^{3}t^{m} ‘lw^{m} w-’rb‘t mḥwl(t)[^{m} ...*
7 *...b]n mwṯr-hw w-s^{2}t’-hw bn mwṯr-hw w-hqs^{2}bw b-h(w)[...*
8 *... s^{1}](h)l-hw w-ṯlṯt fls^{3}t^{m} ‘lw-hw w-qṣ‘w ḥṣm-hw lbẖ[...*
9 *... ’r]ḍ Ḥgr^{m} w-wṯn ‘k^{m} w-kl qh-hw mnhmt^{m} w-grb^{m} ḥb(s^{2})[...*

1 ...] pierres de taille, blocs d'albâtre et *ftẖ* [...
2 ...] son pavement jusqu'à la grande salle et ils ont aussi refait [...
3 ... le mur péri]phérique sauf son sommet et ils ont exécuté tout ce qui était ordonné ... [...
4 ...] jusqu'au *sāj* {*s^{1}k^{m}*} et ils l'ont refait des fondations jusqu'au sommet et[...
5 ...] .. l'année six cent soixante-neuf et ils ont aussi [...
6 ...] et Hinwam quatre assises {*fls^{3}t*} en hauteur et quatre murs périphériqu[es ...
7 ... depuis se]s fondations. Ils l'ont édifié depuis ses fondations et y ont achevé [...
8 ...]son ... et trois assises {*fls^{3}t*} au-dessus de lui. Ils ont plaqué son *ḥṣm* de bois labakh [...
9 ... le Pa]ys de Ḥagūr^{um} et la frontière de ‘Akk^{um} et tout ce qui était ordonné en pierres décoratives, pierres de taille *ḥabash*[...

On peut supposer que le texte original était beaucoup plus long, puisqu'il manque tout le début, avec une invocation religieuse (selon toute vraisemblance) et l'identité de l'auteur, ainsi que la fin qui devait donner une date.

Le vocabulaire qui est de nature technique, présente de sérieuses difficultés d'interprétation qui ne sont pas être traitées ici. Il suffit d'observer que l'utilisation de matériaux coûteux oriente vers l'hypothèse d'un bâtiment public de caractère ostentatoire, comme un palais ou un grand lieu de culte. Ces matériaux sont :

— des pierres décoratives (*mnhmt*) ;
— des blocs d'albâtre (*rbʿt mwgl*), matériau dont le correspondant arabe est sans doute *rukhām*, « marbre » ;
— des pierres taillées (*grb*, arabe *jarūb*, terme utilisé par al-Azraqī dans sa description d'al-Qalīs et par al-Hamdānī dans celle de Ghumdān) ;
— des pierres taillées (*grb*), notamment de couleur noire (*grb ḥb*(s^{2})*[...]*) ;
— du bois labakh (*lbẖ*, arabe *labakh*, terme utilisé par al-Azraqī dans sa description d'al-Qalīs, et glosé par « ébène » : « un *minbar* de bois *labakh*, qui est chez eux l'ébène » [63]).

Enfin, il n'est pas impossible de rapprocher l'énigmatique s^{1}*km* ou $s^{1}k^{m}$ de la l. 4 de l'arabe *sāj* qui désigne le bois résistant et précieux dans lequel on avait taillé les deux poutres de 60 coudées, dites « Kuʿayb » et la « Femme de Kuʿayb », le revêtement du *bayt* et l'escalier de la chaire.

Dans un poème où ʿAlqama b. dhī Jadan (VIIIe siècle ?) évoque la splendeur de Ghumdān, plusieurs de ces matériaux se retrouvent naturellement : *manhama* (vocalisation incertaine ; le mot est lu *tthmh* par Fāris et *b-mbhmh* par al-Akwaʿ), *sāj* et *labākh* [64]. Il est manifeste que tout auteur yéménite se doit de mentionner ces matériaux quand il veut souligner la splendeur d'un monument.

Le soin avec lequel le texte est composé et gravé, avec ses trois registres parfaitement égaux et ses lettres en relief finement gravées et régulièrement distribuées, ne peut se comparer, au VIe s., qu'avec la grande inscription d'Abraha à Ma'rib (*CIH* 541).

Si on esquisse une typologie des inscriptions plus ou moins contemporaines, quelques observations éclairantes peuvent être faites. À partir du règne de Maʿdīkarib Yaʿfur (deux inscriptions rupestres datées de 521), toutes les inscriptions ont pour auteur soit le roi soit l'un de ses exécutants. Par ailleurs, presque toutes commémorent un événement ou une série d'événements considérés comme d'importance majeure. Une liste de ces inscriptions, dans

[63] al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, p. 139 : *minbar min khashab al-labakh — wa-huwa ʿinda-hum al-abanūs.*
[64] al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl* 8, texte éd. Fāris, p. 18 ; texte éd. al-Akwaʿ, p. 57.

l'ordre chronologique, avec indication de l'auteur et du contenu, est très parlante :

— Règne de Maʿdīkarib Yaʿfur

1. Maʾsal 2 = Ry 510 (*ḏ-qyẓ*^{n} 631, juin 521) ; royale ; commémoration d'une expédition militaire qui atteint le ʿIrāq ;
2. Ḥamḍa 1 = Ja 2484 (*ḏ-ḫrf*^{n} 631, août 521) ; royale ; commémoration de la même expédition.

— Règne de Yūsuf Asʾar Yathʾar

3. Ry 508 (*ḏ-qyẓ*^{n} 633, juin 523) ; chef de l'armée royale ; commémoration d'une expédition militaire pour réduire une révolte à Najrān ;
4. Ja 1028 (*ḏ-mḏrʾ*^{n} 633, juillet 523) ; chef de l'armée royale ; commémoration de la même expédition ;
5. Ry 507 (*ḏ-mḏrʾ*^{n} 633, juillet 523) ; chef de l'armée royale ; commémoration de la même expédition ;

6-12. Ry 512, 513, 514, 515 ; Ja 1030, 1031, 1032 (contemporaines des inscriptions datant de juin et juillet 523) ; officiers du chef de l'armée royale ; simple mention de leur présence.

— Interrègne et règne de Sumūyafaʿ Ashwaʿ

13. *CIH* 621 (*ḏ-ḥlt*^{n} 640, février 530) ; prince engagé dans le parti aksūmite ; commémoration de travaux de fortifications et rappel d'événements récents ;
14. Ist. 7608 bis (= *RES* 3904) + Wellcome A103664 ; royale ; commémoration d'une construction et de la réorganisation de l'État.

— Règne d'Abraha

15. Sadd Maʾrib 4 = DAI GDN 2002/20 (*ḏ-ḥlt*^{n} *ʾḫ(r)[*^{n}*]* 658, mois intercalaire au début de l'année 548) ; royale ; commémoration d'une réfection de la Digue de Marib ;
16. Sadd Maʾrib 5 = *CIH* 541 (*ḏ-mʿn* 658, mars 548) ; royale ; commémoration de la même réfection de la Digue de Marib et de toute une série d'événements concomitants (réduction de la révolte de Kinda et de princes sabéens et yazʾanides ; conférence diplomatique ; consécration d'une église à Marib) ;
17. Muraygh̄ān 1 = Ry 506 (*ḏ-ʿl*^{n} 662, septembre 552) ; royale ; commémoration d'une expédition militaire en Arabie centrale ;
18. Muraygh̄ān 2 : graffite rédigé par un prince ḥimyarite participant à l'expédition commémorée dans Muraygh̄ān 1 ;
19. Muraygh̄ān 3 ; royale ; commémoration de l'expulsion d'un prince arabe et de

la soumission de cinq régions et tribus de l'Arabie orientale et septentrionale ;
20. Sadd Ma'rib 6 = Ja 547 + 546 + 544 + 545 (*ḏ-mhlt*ⁿ 668, novembre 558) ; chefs d'un contingent tribal participant à une réfection de la Digue de Marib ; commémoration de cette réfection ;
21. *CIH* 525 (669 ḥim., 559-560).

On constate que les inscriptions de la période finale se distinguent de celles des 150 années qui précèdent de deux manières : elles ont le roi pour auteur et commémorent des faits marquants, alors que précédemment elles étaient rédigées par des particuliers qui célébraient l'achèvement de palais ou d'aménagements agricoles. Elles sont désormais des instruments de propagande politique. La vraisemblance est donc très grande que *CIH* 325 soit elle aussi une inscription rédigée par un roi et qu'elle commémore l'achèvement de travaux d'importance exceptionnelle ; la date de 559-560 suggère que ce roi est Abraha.

Le seul monument datant du règne d'Abraha dont la construction a été célébrée et retenue par la Tradition arabo-islamique est la Grande Église de Ṣan'ā'. Bien évidemment, même si ce n'est pas une preuve que *CIH* 325 est une partie de l'inscription de fondation d'al-Qalīs, une telle conclusion paraît vraisemblable [65].

En conclusion, il semble assuré que l'inscription *CIH* 325 est royale et qu'elle commémore une construction ostentatoire qui ne peut être que Ghumdān ou al-Qalīs. La date implique que son auteur est le roi Abraha. Le monument dont la construction est célébrée est plutôt al-Qalīs puisque la Tradition associe sa construction (et elle seule) au nom d'Abraha.

En 1991, Walter W. Müller avait proposé une interprétation très différente de *CIH* 325. Il supposait que l'inscription provenait du nord-ouest de la région de Ḥajja (ville située à 75 km au nord-nord-ouest de Ṣan'ā') parce que le texte mentionne les tribus arabes de Hinwam (l. 6), Ḥajūr^{um} et 'Akk^{um} (l. 9).

Cette proposition fait difficulté parce que, dans l'Antiquité, cette zone n'était pas intégrée dans la Sudarabie (l'ensemble des régions de culture sudarabique). Elle est encore en marge du Yémen islamique à l'époque d'al-Hamdānī. C'est seulement vers les XIᵉ-XIIᵉ s. que l'intégration se produit (Wilson 1982). Il est donc peu vraisemblable qu'on ait commémoré des travaux importants au moyen d'une grande inscription très soignée dans une région où il n'y a pas de vestiges antiques et où l'écriture ne semble guère avoir été pratiquée.

La mention de Hinwam dans la dernière ligne du paragraphe 2 et de Ḥajūr^{um} et 'Akk^{um} dans la dernière ligne du paragraphe 3 peut s'expliquer autrement : ce sont probablement les membres de ces tribus qui ont contribué à la construction

65 Il ne saurait être complètement exclu, par exemple, que l'inscription commémore une réfection du palais Ghumdān, qui aurait été incendié par les Aksūmites au moment de la conquête de Ṣan'ā' (al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, I, p. 138).

de la Grande Église, en fournissant la main d'œuvre et les matériaux. Ces contributions paraissent logiques : au Yémen, le christianisme était surtout enraciné dans les populations du versant occidental de la chaîne yéménite, de Wuḥāẓat au sud à Nagrān au nord.

Walter W. Müller était guidé dans son interprétation par la conviction que l'inscription commémorait notamment la réalisation d'aménagements hydrauliques. Il rendait *mḥwl*, pl. *mḥwlt*, par « (Wasser)reservoir », s^1k^m par « Sperre », et fls^3t^m par « Ausflüsse ». En réalité, aucune de ces interprétations n'est sûre. Par ailleurs, il est inhabituel qu'un texte mêle la commémoration d'une superbe construction avec celle d'aménagements hydrauliques.

Nous supposons donc que l'inscription *CIH* 325 est royale et qu'elle commémore la construction d'al-Qalīs. Il en résulte que l'édification d'al-Qalīs avait déjà commencé en 559-560. De manière évidemment légèrement approximative, on peut désormais dater la fin des travaux en 560 ou, moins vraisemblablement, dans l'une des années qui suivent. On peut donc dater désormais al-Qalīs de 560 environ.

Une telle date rejette la fameuse expédition de l'Éléphant après 560, sans qu'il soit possible d'être plus précis [66].

Sigles épigraphiques

Pour les inscriptions datées :

CIH 621
Ja 1028
Ḥamḍa 1 = Ja 2484
Maʾsal 2 = Ry 510
Murayghān 1 = Ry 506
Murayghān 2 (sans date, mais donnée à la suite de Murayghān 1, p. 119)
Ry 507
Ry 508
Sadd Maʾrib 4 = DAI GDN 2002/20
Sadd Maʾrib 5 = *CIH* 541
Sadd Maʾrib 6 = Ja 547 + 546 + 544 + 545

[66] Christian Julien Robin, « L'Arabie dans le Coran. Réexamen de quelques termes à la lumière des inscriptions préislamiques », dans *Les origines du Coran, le Coran des origines*. Actes de colloque, édd. François Déroche, Christian Robin et Michel Zinc, Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2015, pp. 46-58.

voir Walter W. Müller, *Sabäische Inschriften nach Ären datiert. Bibliographie, Texte und Glossar* (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur – Mainz, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission, 53), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010 (ouvrage dans lequel les inscriptions sont classées en fonction de la date).

Pour Ja 1030, Ja 1031, Ja 1032, Ry 512, Ry 513, Ry 514, Ry 515 : voir Christian Julien Robin, « Joseph, dernier roi de Ḥimyar (de 522 à 525, ou une des années suivantes) », *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008), pp. 1-124, pp. 85-87 et 89-91.

Pour Ist. 7608 bis (= *RES* 3904) + Wellcome A103664 : voir Robin, « Joseph, dernier roi de Ḥimyar », pp. 96-100.

Pour Murayghān 3 : voir Robin & Ṭayrān, « Soixante-dix ans avant l'Islam ».

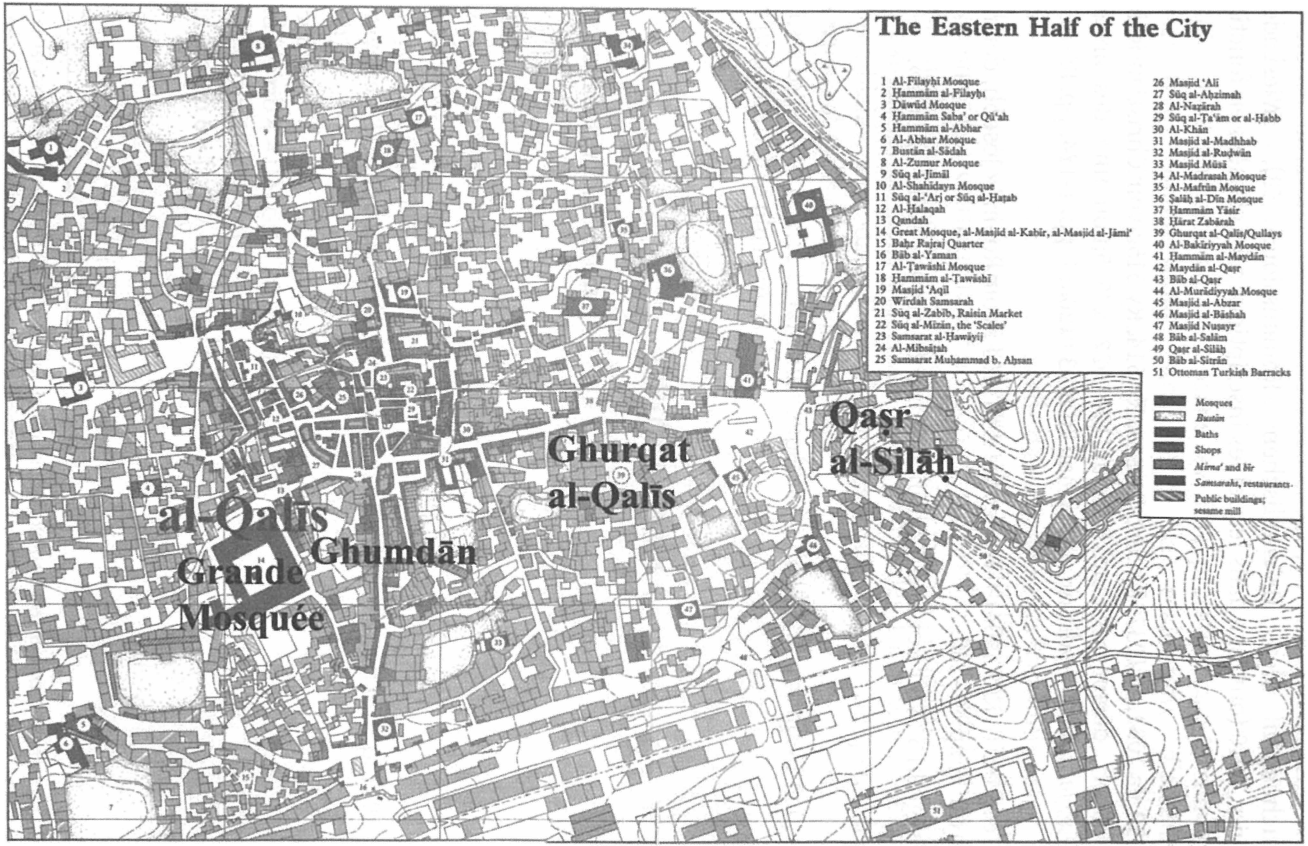


Fig. 1 : Plan de la ville de Ṣan'ā' (d'après Serjeant & Lewcock, *Ṣan'ā', an Arabian Islamic City*, pp. 140-141), avec la localisation d'al-Qalīs proposée dans cette contribution.



Fig. 2 : Chapiteau provenant probablement d'al-Qalīs, remployé dans la grande Mosquée de Ṣan'ā' (photographie Christian Julien Robin, 1978).



Fig. 3 : *CIH* 325, fragment probable de l'inscription de fondation d'al-Qalīs (photographie Manar Hammad).

Networks and social cohesion in ancient Indian Ocean trade: geography, ethnicity, religion*

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Introduction

The western Indian Ocean was the central hub of ancient world trade. Chinese silk, Indian spices and textiles, African ivory, Arabian aromatics, Afghan gems, Egyptian glass, Syrian wine and Spanish silver were among the many commodities that crossed the ocean in the hold of ships from all coasts of the Arabian Sea, Persian/Arabian Gulf and Red Sea.[1] As in later periods, the trade was made possible by the monsoon winds, which in the Arabian Sea blow steadily from the southwest from June to September / October, and from the northeast from November to April / May,[2] thus facilitating predictable, although not necessarily smooth or safe, passage between all ports of call in the course of a year.

Premodern trade in the Indian Ocean was far from smooth sailing. The seasonality of the monsoon combined with limited possibilities for overland travel made communication between travelling merchants and their home base

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1 Roberta Tomber, *Indo-Roman trade, from pots to pepper*, London: Duckworth, 2008. Himanshu P. Ray, *The archaeology of seafaring in ancient South Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Raoul McLaughlin, *Rome and the distant East: trade routes to the ancient lands of Arabia, India and China*, London: Continuum, 2010, pp. 23-60; Steven E. Sidebotham, *Berenike and the ancient maritime spice route*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011; Eivind Heldaas Seland, *Ports and power in the Periplus: complex societies and maritime trade on the Indian Ocean in the first century AD*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010.

2 National Imagery and Mapping Agency, *PUB 109: Atlas of pilot charts for the Indian Ocean,* 4th edition, Culver City: National Imagery and Mapping Agency, 2001; Lionel Casson, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, pp. 283-5; William Facey, 'The Red Sea: the wind regime and location of ports', in *Trade and travel in the Red Sea region: proceedings of the Red Sea project I. held in the British Museum october 2002*, ed. Paul Lunde and Alexandra Porter, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004, pp. 7-17; Eivind Heldaas Seland, 'The Persian Gulf or the Red Sea? Two axes in ancient Indian Ocean trade, where to go and why', *World Archaeology* 43:3 (2001), pp. 398-409.

outside sailing seasons all but impossible, and as information rarely travelled faster than people, traders would seldom have information about local conditions before they were actually on the spot. Merchants operated under conditions set by their hosts, who as Peder F. Bang points out in his recent monograph on comparative aspects of premodern trade, generally combined protection, taxation and predation.[3]

The organizational solution to this situation was communities of resident merchants on foreign ground, generally called *trading diasporas*. The term was coined by Abner Cohen,[4] and later developed by Phillip Curtin, who saw such groups as universal facilitators or go-betweens of premodern cross-cultural trade.[5] Diaspora groups were experts on home- and host-cultures alike, and could provide the infrastructure of trust needed for people operating far away from home. Early examples are known from the second millennium BCE cuneiform archives from Anatolian Kültepe / Kanesh,[6] and the archaic period Greek settlement at Naucratis in the Nile Delta.[7] In the Indian Ocean, the rhythm of the monsoons would in many cases cause visiting crews and merchants to spend a minimum of several months in their ports of call, waiting for the right season to return home. Some of them stayed behind, whether permanently or for shorter periods of time. Shipwreck, slavery and personal circumstances also caused a significant number of Indian Ocean travellers to end up in places other than that of their origin.

Excellent studies exist of Indian Ocean merchant communities of the medieval and early modern periods,[8] but our knowledge of their ancient counterparts remains limited. The subject deserves a full scale study, but pending that, this

3 Peter Fibiger Bang, *The Roman bazaar : a comparative study of trade and markets in a tributary empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 131-201.

4 Abner Cohen, 'Cultural strategies in the organization of trading diasporas', in *The development of indigenous trade and markets in West Africa*, ed. Claude Meillassoux, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 266-284.

5 P.D. Curtin, *Cross cultural trade in world history*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

6 Mogens Trolle Larsen, 'The Old Assyrian City-State', in *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures : an investigation conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre*, ed. Mogens Herman Hansen, Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 2000, pp. 77-87.

7 Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.154, 2.178 = A.D. Godley (ed. /transl.) *Herodotus, the Persian wars*, vol. 1, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920.

8 Patricia Risso, *Merchants and faith : Muslim commerce and culture in the Indian Ocean*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995; S.D. Goitein, 'Portrait of a medieval India trader: three letters from the Cairo Geniza', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50:3 (1983), pp. 449-464; id., *Letters of medieval Jewish traders*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974; Roxani Eleni Margariti, *Aden & the Indian Ocean trade : 150 years in the life of a medieval Arabian port*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007; S. D. Goitein and Mordechai Akiva Friedman, *India traders of the middle ages: documents from the Cairo Geniza: India book*, Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2008; K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe: economy and civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

article is an attempt to look at some network-aspects of ancient Indian Ocean trade, as they appear in a selection of literary and epigraphic sources, and with emphasis on institutions of social cohesion: What made people feel that they belonged to the same group? How could merchants establish the necessary infrastructure of trust? Examples are provided of trading communities organized along lines of geographical origin, ethnicity and religion, and the argument is made that the development of Christian trading diasporas in late antiquity anticipates the existence of the better documented Jewish and Islamic diasporas of later periods.

Trading diasporas, circulation societies and social networks

The term 'diaspora' and the trading diaspora model in particular have recently drawn criticism. Rogers Brubaker points out that the use of 'diaspora' has become so widespread that it stands in danger of becoming unproductive as an analytical category.[9] He proposes that in order to qualify as true diasporas, communities must (1) be dispersed, (2) be oriented towards a real or imagined homeland and (3) preserve a distinctive identity towards host societies.[10] S.D. Aslanian points out that the notion of trading diasporas presupposes a centre, or home culture as it was called above. This was not the case with the Armenian trading community studied by Aslanian, nor, for that sake with the polycentric Jewish community documented in the Cairo Geniza, which included merchants permanently based in Egypt, Southern Arabia and India,[11] as well as in Mediterranean ports. Aslanian suggests instead the concept of 'circulation societies'.[12] Valid as this distinction might be, on a more general level trading diasporas and circulation societies are simply two ways of characterizing networks of social and commercial interaction, and arguably, both were represented in the western Indian Ocean in the ancient period. Here, the applications of social network analysis, such as that represented by the recent work of Irad Malkin and others on Greek networks in the Mediterranean might have something to offer,[13] as it allows us to look at diasporas and circulation societies as two varieties of the same phenomenon.

9 Rogers Brubaker, 'The 'diaspora' diaspora', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28:1 (2005), pp. 1-19.

10 Brubaker, 'The 'diaspora' diaspora', pp. 5–7.

11 Goitein, 'Portrait of a medieval India trader'; id., *Letters of medieval Jewish traders*; Margariti, *Aden & the Indian Ocean trade*; Goitein and Friedman, *India traders of the middle ages.*

12 Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: the global trade networks of Armenian merchants from New Julfa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011, pp. 1-22.

13 Irad Malkin, 'Networks and the emergence of Greek Identity', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18:2 (2003), pp. 56-74; Kostas Vlassopoulos, 'Beyond and below the polis: networks, associations, and the writing of Greek history', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22:1 (2007), pp. 11-22. Irad Malkin, *A small Greek world: networks in the ancient Mediterranean*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011;

Network analysis has a long tradition within the social sciences,[14] and has made increasing impact within the humanities over the past decades.[15] In a basic sense, of course, charting social networks is nothing more than a way of saying that people were in touch with each other. Network analysis, however, can be very useful for visualizing connections. Networks (fig. 1) are composed of *nodes*, in this case individuals or meeting places, *clusters*, groups of nodes and *links*, the lines connecting the nodes. For the historian, the links are of special interest, as these represent the ties connecting people. With regard to this, conventional network analysis, with an emphasis on quantifying and measuring ties, has less to offer, but perspectives from other disciplines more suited for qualitative analyses might help. Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis and Barry R. Weingast recently developed economic historian and Nobel laureate North's earlier work on New Institutional Economics into a set of analytical tools, which allows the study of human societies regardless of geographical and chronological setting.[16] The authors address the Weberian observation that all human societies have to deal with the problem of containing violence. This, according to North et al. is achieved by means of *organizations* and *institutions*. By *organizations* they refer to groups of people acting in at least a partly coordinated way and with the aim of controlling economic resources.[17] Networks, whether of the trading diaspora or the circulation society type, can be described as organizations in this sense. Links can be approached as *institutions*: 'the rules of the game, the patterns of interaction that govern and constrain the relationship of individuals'.[18] In order to understand merchant communities in the Indian Ocean, we need to investigate these institutions. These would be what helped dispersed merchant communities preserve the notion of a real or perceived homeland and their identity vis-à-vis host societies, the qualifications Brubaker suggests for true diaspora communities.[19] Below, the institutions underpinning three ancient networks will

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Irad Malkin, Christy Constantakopoulou and Katerina Panagopoulou, eds., *Greek and Roman networks in the Mediterranean*, London: Routledge, 2011.

14 Stephen P. Borgatti, Ajay Mehra, Daniel J. Brass and Giuseppe Labianca, 'Network Analysis in the Social Sciences', *Science* 323, 5916 (2009), pp. 892-5; Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust, *Social network analysis: methods and applications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

15 In addition to Malkin's work, *supra*, see the modern classic John F. Padgett and Christopher K. Ansell, 'Robust action and the rise of the Medici, 1400-1434', *American Journal of Sociology* 98:6 (1993), pp. 1259-1319; Giovanni Ruffini, *Social Networks in Byzantine Egypt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and the forthcoming Tom Brughmans, Anna Collar and Fiona Coward (eds), *The Connected Past: challenging networks in archaeology and history*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

16 Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and social orders: a conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

17 North, Wallis, Weingast, *Violence and social orders*, p. 15.

18 North, Wallis, Weingast, *Violence and social orders*, p. 15.

19 Brubaker, 'The 'diaspora' diaspora', pp. 5-6.

be investigated: those described in the first century CE navigation and trade manual *Periplus Maris Erythraei;* those in the first to third century epigraphic record relating to the Syrian city of Palmyra; and those in descriptions by Christian travellers and traders in late antiquity. While it is clear that these sources all depict Indian Ocean trade from Egyptian, Mesopotamian and arguably also Roman / Parthian / Sasanian metropolitan or imperial points of view, they nevertheless give insight into different ways of organizing ancient commerce that are of interest on proto-global or even global levels.

Networks based on geography: The 'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea'

The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* is a report on Indian Ocean trade and navigation, written in *koine* Greek in the mid first century CE by a merchant from Egypt,[20] which was then a part of the Roman Empire. In sixty-six brief chapters, the work gives details on how and when to sail to different Indian Ocean destinations, what to buy, what to sell, as well as on local political conditions relevant to visiting merchants. With some exceptions, the parts describing the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Arabian and Indian coasts of the Arabian Sea, seem to be based on first-hand knowledge or reliable reports, while the descriptions of the east coast of Africa below Ras Hafun, the Persian / Arabian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal appear to be badly informed.[21]

The author of the *Periplus* is mainly concerned with the destinations and activities of merchants from Egypt, but he also provides information on other networks, although the description of these is very likely to be incomplete.[22] In summary, we find networks centred on Egypt, the kingdoms of Saba-Himyar and Hadramawt in South Arabia, Southern Mesopotamia (ruled by the Parthian / Arsacid Empire at this time), the region called Ariakê in western India (the Kshatrapa-kingdom) and the region called Limyrikê in South India (early Tamil kingdoms) (cf. fig. 2). Explicit or indirect references to diaspora settlements in the *Periplus* are limited to Adulis in present-day Eritrea (sec. 6), Rhapta in East Africa (sec. 16), Socotra (sec. 30) and Muziris in southern India (sec. 56), but based on what we know about Indian Ocean trade from other periods and the seasonality of Indian Ocean navigation, it seems almost certain that at least some traders or other resident foreigners must have been present also in the other ports taking part in this trade. The material evidence from ancient port sites does not always offer the opportunity to draw conclusions on the ethnicity or origin of visiting and resident traders, but excavated port sites such as Pattanam (probably

20 Casson, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*, pp. 6-8.
21 Seland, *Ports and power in the Periplus*, p. 15.
22 Seland, *Ports and power in the Periplus*, pp. 67-69.

Muziris) and Arikamedu in India seem to have had a heterogeneous population.[23] There are archaeological indications of residents of Indian origin from the Egyptian Red Sea ports of Berenike and Myos Hormos,[24] as well as Khor Rori in modern Oman,[25] and worshipers from India, Arabia and Syria found their way to a cave sanctuary on the island of Socotra.[26]

Analyzing the first-century networks described in the *Periplus* (fig. 2), merchants from Egypt traded with Adulis (sec. 6), ports in northern present-day Somalia (sec. 8-14), Saba-Himyar and Hadramawt in South Arabia (sec. 24, 28), Socotra (sec. 30), Barbarikon at the mouth of the Indus and Barygaza on the Narmada River (sec. 39, 49) as well as Muziris and Nelkynda in South India (sec. 56). Merchants from South Arabia traded with Socotra (sec. 30), the coast of East Africa (sec. 16), the Nabataean kingdom in modern Jordan and Saudi Arabia (sec. 19) and ports of the Parthian Empire (sec. 27, 36), as well as Barbarikon (sec. 27, 39), Barygaza (sec. 21, 32, 49) and the region of Limyrikê (sec. 32). Ships from ports in the Parthian Empire are said to have visited South Arabia and Barygaza (sec. 36). Products from Ariakê were traded in Adulis (sec. 6), Somalia (sec. 14), Saba-Himyar (sec. 21), Hadramawt (sec. 27, 32), Socotra (sec. 31), Parthian ports (sec. 36), South India (sec. 51, 54) and the Coromandel Coast (sec. 51). Limyrikê traded with Socotra (sec. 31), Hadramawt (sec. 32), the Coromandel Coast (sec. 60) and ports in the Bay of Bengal (sec. 60).

In the *Periplus,* these networks are described according to their geographical wellspring. In some cases this was a port, such as Barygaza, in other cases a region such as Arabia, Egypt or Limyrikê (South India), or a polity, such as Persis (in this context the Parthian/Arsacid empire) or Ariakê (Kshatrapas). Occasionally, as in the description of the mixed population of Socotra (sec. 30), generalizing labels such as Greek (*hellên*), Arab (*araps*) and Indian (*indos*) are employed. These are clearly constructs, but reflect how the author of the *Periplus* and presumably also his contemporary readership grouped people according to culture and geographical origin. Ethnicity, loosely defined as perceived common

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23 Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade*, pp. 147-151.

24 Sidebotham, 'Berenike and the ancient maritime spice route', pp. 74-75; Ross Thomas and Paul Masser, '7.2. Trench 8', in *Myos Hormos - Quseir al-Qadim. Roman and Islamic Ports on the Red Sea. Volume 1: Survey and Excavations 1999-2003*, ed. David Peacock and Lucy Blue, Oxford: Oxbow, 2006, pp. 127-40.

25 T.S. Subramanian, 'Potsherd with Tamil-Brahmi script found in Oman', *The Hindu,* online version October 28 2012, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/potsherd-with-tamilbrahmi-script-found-in-oman/article4038866.ece (consulted 7 June 2013).

26 Hédi Dridi, 'Indiens et proche-orientaux dans une grotte de Suquṭrā (Yemen)', *Journal Asiatique* 290:2 (2002), pp. 565-610; Christian Robin and M. Gorea, 'Les vestiges antiques de la grotte de Hôq (Suqutra, Yémen)', *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 146:2 (2002), pp. 409-445; Ingo Strauch (ed.), *Foreign sailors on Socotra : the inscriptions and drawings from the cave Hoq*, Bremen: Hempen, 2012.

ancestry and boundary-maintenance towards other groups,[27] does not seem to have been the main cohesive institution of these networks, however. Most 'Greeks' encountered in the Indian Ocean world would come from the Roman and Parthian empires, some perhaps also from the erstwhile Greek-ruled regions of northwestern India. These regions were multicultural and highly heterogeneous societies, and this would probably also apply to their merchant populations. Studies of the perception of Greek identity in late Hellenistic Alexandria, a very relevant context for the *Periplus*, show that primary language, not descent, was the defining variable. Individuals with Egyptian names and also Jews appear as 'Greeks' in documents, which makes Greek identity a matter of culture.[28] In the *Periplus,* merchants from Arabia are not only described as Arabs (sec. 16, 30), but also with information on which city or kingdom they came from, signifying that they were not perceived as a homogenous group. India, as described in the *Periplus*, included the region eastwards to the Ganges, which was home to a number of peoples that would probably qualify as distinct ethnic groups.

If geographical origin was more important than ethnicity in bringing together people from Egypt or Mesopotamia when they were travelling to Arabia or India and *vice versa,* shared ties such as language, affiliation to a polity and religion might have played a role in fostering cohesion. An ability to communicate in a common language, although not necessarily a first language, would be a *sine non qua* among members of the network. The language situation of the Indian Ocean rim was complex, but presumably this language would be Greek in the case of the Egyptian network, Greek or Aramaic in the case of Mesopotamia and dialects of South Arabian in the case of Saba-Himyar and Hadramawt. In north-western India, Prakrit, Sanskrit and Greek are known from inscriptions and coin legends from this period, and further south on the subcontinent, the use of Prakrit, Tamil, Old Sinhala and Sanskrit – all written in Brahmi script, is documented from archaeological settings.[29] Based on this evidence, Himanshu P. Ray identifies three language groups involved in overlapping trading networks in peninsular India.[30] The excavations of Berenikê, an important Red Sea port in Egypt, have so far unearthed texts in twelve different languages, underlining the cosmopolitan character of ancient Indian Ocean trade.[31] In the cases of Egypt (Roman Empire),

27 Brubaker, 'The 'diaspora' diaspora', pp. 5-7.

28 Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: between ethnicity and culture,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002, pp. 222-224; Dorothy J. Thompson, 'Language and literacy in early Hellenistic Egypt', in *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt*, ed. Per Bilde, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Lise Hannestad and Jan Zahle, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992, pp. 50-51.

29 Himanshu Prabha Ray, 'Inscribed Pots, Emerging Identities: The Social Milieu of Trade', in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 113-143, esp. p. 121.

30 Ray, 'Inscribed Pots', p. 121.

31 Sidebotham, 'Berenike and the ancient maritime spice route', p. 55.

Mesopotamia (Parthian Empire) and Ariakê (Kshatrapas), networks also centred on a common polity and economy. This was probably important for merchants because even if ancient states were not homogenous and integrated economies, merchants would have dealt with the same set of more or less familiar laws, political institutions, and monetary systems throughout the region. In the cases of South Arabia and South India, this was not necessarily so, as the regions were politically fragmented in the period. As for religion, merchants originating from the same region would have also been familiar with a shared polytheistic pantheon, although they may well have held different preferences within it.

Affiliation to a polity was determined by geographical origin, and geography would normally also influence language and religion. On one hand this means that networks were characterized by relatively open access: Merchants sailing out from Egypt on Egyptian ships would probably be oriented towards a common homeland, regardless of whether they originally came from Syria, Greece, Egypt or Arabia. They would all to some extent be able to communicate in Greek, relate to the same political and economic frameworks (the Roman Empire and Roman Egypt) and they would be familiar with a shared Mediterranean pantheon. On the other hand, such networks would probably also be characterized by weak cohesion, because the institutions connecting the members of the network when they were abroad were of little importance at home. Once back in Egypt, a network of merchants from the Roman Empire would disintegrate into Syrians, Greeks, Egyptians, and Arabs communicating in Aramaic, Greek, Demotic and Arabic. A Mediterranean / Near Eastern pantheon, which might have seemed shared compared to its South Arabian or Indian counterparts, would dissolve into a Syrian Bel, a Greek Zeus and an Egyptian Amon, who, although they were identified with each other, were also deities connected to different places and groups.

The apparent fragility of a network based on origin may seem like a major weakness, but looking more closely, the flexibility of such networks might also be the key to understanding their success. The networks encountered in the *Periplus* seem to fit into the pattern of those studied by Mark S. Granovetter in his modern network classic, *The strength of weak ties.*[32] Granovetter argued that weak connections facilitate integration, precisely because they are open and easy to form, while strong ties lead to fragmentation, because they depend on prolonged contact and interdependence.

[32] Mark S. Granovetter, 'The Strenght of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology* 78:6 (1973), pp. 1360-1380.

A network based on ethnicity: the case of Palmyra

Epigraphic material from the Syrian city of Palmyra allows a glimpse of a different way of organizing social networks. The city played an important role in the trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean in the first three centuries CE,[33] taking part in maritime commerce by way of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, in addition to overland caravan trade across the Syrian Desert.[34] The commercial activities of Palmyra are mostly known from epigraphic evidence. A body of circa thirty so-called 'caravan inscriptions' from Palmyra itself commemorates the successful return of caravans from the Persian Gulf, and documents the presence of Palmyrene individuals and communities in Mesopotamia, as well as their trade with northwestern India.[35] There are also some eighty inscriptions found outside Palmyra referring to people from the city. Many of these were dedicated by auxiliary soldiers in Roman service in Dacia (modern Rumania) and Numidia (modern Algeria). Others, however, refer explicitly to Palmyrenes taking part in Red Sea trade,[36] or they have been found in locations that make connections with commercial activities a likely explanation for their presence, such as the commercial suburb of Transtiberim (Trastevere) in Rome,[37] the Red Sea port of Berenike in Egypt,[38] Wadi Hadramawt in Yemen[39] and Socotra in the Arabian Sea.[40] If we include inscriptions found in places on the likely routes of communication between Palmyra and the Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports,[41] we arrive at a possible layout of a Palmyrene commercial

[33] Javier Teixidor, 'Un port romain du désert, Palmyre et son commerce d'Auguste à Caracalla', *Semitica* 34 (1978), pp. 1-127; Michel Gawlikowski, 'Palmyra as a Trading Centre', *Iraq* 56 (1994), pp. 27-33; id. 'Palmyra and its Caravan Trade', *Les Annales Archeologiques Arabes Syriennes* 42 (1996), pp. 139-44, John F. Healey, 'Palmyra and the Arabian Gulf Trade', *ARAM* 8 (1996), pp. 33-37.

[34] Seland, 'The Persian Gulf or the Red Sea', pp. 398-409.

[35] List in Jean-Baptiste Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre*, Beyrouth: Institut Français d'Archaelogie du Proche Orient, 2002, pp. 262-263.

[36] Jean Bingen, 'Une dédicace de marchands palmyréniens à Coptos', *Chronique D'Égypte* 59 (1984), pp. 355-358; André Bernand, *Les portes du désert recueil des inscriptions grecques d'Antinooupolis, Tentyris, Koptos, Apollonopolis Parva et Apollonopolis Magna*, Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984, pp. 146-147, 262-263.

[37] Yon, 'Les notables de Palmyre', p. 272.

[38] M. Dijkstra and A.M.F.W. Verhoogt, 'The Greek-Palmyrene inscription', in *Berenike 1997: Report of the 1997 Excavations at Berenike and the Survey of the Egyptian Eastern Desert, including Excavations at Shenshef*, ed. S.E. Sidebotham and W.Z. Wendrich, Leiden: CNWS, 1999, pp. 207-218.

[39] F. Bron, 'Palmyreniens et chaldeens en Arabie du sud', *Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico* 3 (1986), pp. 95-8.

[40] Robin and Gorea, 'Les vestiges antiques', p. 436.

[41] cf. Yon, 'Les Notables de Palmyre', p. 273. I have left out the Palmyrene inscriptions from the Jewish cemetery of Beth Shearim in Galilee, as they are likely to belong to religious contexts rather than commercial.

network (fig. 3). As was the case with the networks described in the *Periplus*, this representation is very likely to be incomplete, as merchants and other people from Palmyra would have visited, lived in and worked in places where they left no epigraphic record surviving to the modern period.

The Palmyrene network seems to have been a diaspora in the traditional sense of the word, exhibiting all three criteria of a true diaspora society as defined by Brubaker.[42] First, its members were geographically widely dispersed. Second, they showed their orientation towards a real homeland, the city of Palmyra, by means of one or more of the criteria making it possible for us to identify them as Palmyrenes: use of the Palmyrene Aramaic language, explicit references to Palmyrene origin and / or references to the Palmyrene pantheon. Third, they used their own language and references to their own pantheon as an effective way of preserving a separate identity within their host societies.

Several institutions kept the Palmyrene network together. The widespread use of a common language, Palmyrene Aramaic, even if regularly used alongside Greek and in a few cases Latin, is significant, as most other societies in Roman Syria and elsewhere in the Roman East utilized Greek alone in public inscriptions. Kinship ties and descent were also clearly important, as reference is frequently made not only to the father, but also the paternal grandfather and great-grandfather of the person dedicating or honoured in an inscription. Tribal affiliation might have played a role, as we know that the population of Palmyra was organized into tribes, although it is not clear whether these were based on real or perceived common ancestry, or were instead of purely political and administrative nature like those in many Mediterranean communities. It is also not known whether the nature of these tribes changed over the course of the nearly three centuries covered by the inscriptional record.[43] Politically, Palmyra was organized as a Hellenistic style city-state, and many or most free, male, adult inhabitants, would have belonged to the citizenry, taking part in the civic life of the city together.[44] Inscriptions from Palmyra also reveal professional and religious associations of different kinds, for instance an association (*symposion*) of tanners and floating-skin-makers (*askonautopoioi*),[45] the latter activity almost certainly being connected to downriver transport of trading goods on the Euphrates on *kellek*, rafts supported by inflated skins.[46] Religion would also have

42 Brubaker, 'The 'diaspora' diaspora', pp. 5-6.

43 Cf. Michael Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze: Palmyra, Edessa, Dura-Europos, Hatra: eine Kulturgeschichte von Pompeius bis Diocletian*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005, pp. 175-83; Yon, 'Les Notables de Palmyre', pp. 57-77.

44 Maurice Sartre, 'Palmyre, Cité Grecque', *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 42 (1996), pp. 391-405.

45 IGLS 17.59 = Jean-Baptiste Yon, *Inscriptions Greques et Latines de la Syrie: Palmyre*, Beyrouth: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2012, no. 59.

46 Henri Seyrig, 'Les fils du roi Odainat', *Annales archéologiques de Syrie* 13 (1963), pp. 161-166.

been a point of contact for members of the Palmyrene network, as most of them shared a pantheon different from, although not incompatible with, the Greco-Roman pantheon worshiped elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, and the Near Eastern religions practiced by Palmyra's eastern neighbours.[47] In the case of Palmyra, it seems justified to speak about a distinct ethnic identity:[48] Palmyreans certainly considered themselves different from other people. This is not only visible in language, tribal organization and religion, but also in the unique, but syncretizing art, architecture and burial customs of the city.[49] The main way of becoming a member of the Palmyrene community would have been to be born into it.

The Palmyrene case represents a marked difference from the networks based on geographical origin described in the *Periplus* because institutions like kinship, tribal affiliation and citizenship were important not only abroad, but also at home. If Palmyrene merchants abroad failed to live up to expected standards when dealing with fellow Palmyrenes, this could potentially result in repercussions at home, where members of their extended family, tribe, religious or professional association or simply fellow citizens would be in a position to exercise social or juridical pressure. The Palmyrene network can thus be described as characterized by closed access and strong cohesion, as it was difficult or impossible for outsiders to join, and the institutions regulating interaction between members of the community were numerous and potentially strong. In addition to this, members of the Palmyrene network would also have had access to the social networks based on geographical origin described above. We know of several examples of Palmyrene individuals who were awarded Roman citizenship[50] and who held civic and royal offices in the Parthian Empire.[51] This means that when Palmyrene merchants sailed out of Egyptian or Mesopotamian ports, they possessed the cross-cultural skills and expertise needed to seamlessly integrate with other merchants coming from the Roman and Parthian empires. Thus they combined networks based on strong ties with networks based on weak ties.

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47 See Ted Kaizer, *The religious life of Palmyra: a study of the social patterns of worship in the Roman period*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002, There were, however, also Jewish inhabitants of Palmyra, as the Palmyrene inscriptions from Beth Shearim document, see Yon, 'Les notables de Palmyre', p. 273.

48 Yon, 'Les Notables de Palmyre', pp. 57-98.

49 Malcolm A. R. Colledge, *The art of Palmyra*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.

50 Using the adoption of Latin names alongside Palmyrene as a proxy, see list in 'Les Notables de Palmyre', pp. 254-261.

51 Leonardo Gregoratti, 'The Palmyrenes and the Arsacid Policy', in *Voprosy Epigrafiki: Sbornik Statei (Problems of Epigraphy: Collected Articles), Vypusk* 4, ed. A.G. Avdeev, Moskva: Russkij Fond Sodejstvija Obrazovaniju i Nauke, 2010, pp. 21-37.

The success of the Palmyrene network is evident in the widely-spread epigraphic record, as well as in the wealth and power of the city itself, visible in its third-century attempt at imperial power and the lasting splendour of its ruins. It should, however, also be noted that the model proved to be vulnerable: No sign exists of Palmyrene activity outside of Palmyra after the sack of the city by the Roman Emperor Aurelian in 272/73. Again, this fits well with Granovetter's thesis, that networks built on strong ties are vulnerable to fragmentation.[52] The Palmyrene network in the Indian Ocean world revolved around its Syrian hub, and did not possess the necessary resilience and flexibility to withstand the Roman strike at its centre.

Christianity: networks based on faith

At the same time that the Palmyrene network collapsed, a new model for the organization of social networks in the Indian Ocean world was emerging, one that would prove less vulnerable in the long run. Starting around 200 CE, it is possible to trace the emergence of Christian churches on the Indian Ocean rim. This is of particular interest because of our knowledge of the important role played by religion in Indian Ocean trade in the cases of Buddhism,[53] Judaism[54] and Islam.[55] In the centuries before the emergence of Islam, Christianity, and to some extent Judaism, were the expanding religions in the Indian Ocean. Christianity offered many of the same advantages to traders that other 'portable religions' did.[56] 'Portable religion' refers to faiths that could be worshiped independent of place and primary social group.[57] Ancients polytheistic religions were often celebrated together with members of one's own family, tribe or city-state. Jews, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, however, were expected to worship together with coreligionists with whom they shared no ties apart from faith. Pagan gods were closely connected with their designated places of worship – the Palmyrene chief god Bel, for example, was a different deity from the Babylonian Bel and the Jupiter Baal of Heliopolis (Baalbek), or at least a clearly different aspect of the

52 Granovetter, 'The Strenght of Weak Ties'.

53 Himanshu P. Ray, *Monastery and guild: commerce under the Satavahanas*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986; Himanshu P. Ray, *The winds of change - Buddhism and the maritime links of early South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

54 Goitein, 'Portrait of a medieval India trader'; id., *Letters of medieval Jewish traders*; Margariti, *Aden & the Indian Ocean trade*; Goitein and Friedman, *India traders of the middle ages.*

55 Risso, *Merchants and faith*.

56 Eivind Heldaas Seland, 'Trade and Christianity in the Indian Ocean during Late Antiquity', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 5:1 (2012), pp. 72-86.

57 William McNeill, 'The era of civilizations in world history', *Newsletter of the World History Association* 4:1 (1987), pp. 1-4.

deity. Even if deities had a cosmological presence, the temple was also considered the actual, physical dwelling-place of the god. By contrast, the same God was worshiped in the synagogues of Dura Europos in Syria, Beth She'arim in Galilee and Qana in Yemen, and worship was also possible and expected outside such designated places.

Jonathan Z. Smith conceptualizes these differences by dividing religions into those that are practiced 'here' (the domestic sphere), 'there' (the civic and national spheres) and 'anywhere' [58] While Palmyrene and other Mediterraneran and Near Eastern polytheistic religions primarily belonged to the 'here' and 'there' groups, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and later Islam, were universal in the sense that they could be worshipped anywhere. Traders and travellers belonging to one of these could seek out the local community of co-religionists, and reasonably expect to welcomed there by people who could navigate in the local host culture as well as that of the visiting trader.

It is true that polytheistic religion also has elements of portability and aspects of 'religion anywhere'. Local versions of otherwise identical deities were worshipped in hundreds of shrines across the ancient world, but although two sea-captains from different places might offer sacrifice together in the temple of Neptune / Poseidon in their common port of call, they did not belong to a community of Neptune-worshippers, and preserved no social ties of religious nature when they left the temple. Presumably this is also true for the remarkable cave-sanctuary discovered at Socotra in 2000/2001, where epigraphic sources document presence of worshipers from the Indian subcontinent, South Arabia as well as Palmyra.[59] Certain cults, notably the Roman imperial cult and so-called mystery cults such as the worship of the goddess Isis, had elements of personal membership and devotion. In an Indian Ocean context there is a reference to a *templum Augusti* - temple of the Roman imperial cult, in Muziris in South India on the fourth- or fifth-century CE roadmap known as the *Tabula Peutingeriana*,[60] which if correct,[61] would be a place where Roman citizens could come together to worship. The potential for symbiosis between trade and religion, however, was much greater in the widely dispersed Jewish and Christian communities of late antiquity, where believers could link up with coreligionists anywhere, regardless of whether they were in a place such as a temple or had a specific status, such as citizenship.

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58 Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Here, there and anywhere', in *Relating eeligion: essays in the study of religion*, ed. J. Z. Smith, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004, pp. 323-38.

59 Dridi, 'Indiens et proche-orientaux'; Robin and Gorea, 'Les vestiges antiques'; Strauch, *Foreign Sailors.*

60 Ekkehard Weber, *Tabula Peutingeriana : Codex Vindobonensis 324 : vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat*, Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1976.

61 This is controversial, see Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade*, pp. 30, 148.

An impression of the relationship between trade and Christianity in late antiquity can be pieced together from scattered reports in travel descriptions and church histories. It is clear that church officials and missionaries travelling in the Indian Ocean had to rely on commercial shipping, as other means of maritime passage were simply not available, and overland travel along the hot and arid coasts of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf was difficult at best. The third-century *Acts of Judas Thomas* describes how Thomas, the legendary founder of the Indian church and one of the disciples of Jesus, was sold into slavery and accompanied the merchant Habban on a ship to the Indo-Scythian kingdom on the Indus plain, where he set to work as a carpenter/architect on the royal palace of king Gondophares.[62] The *Acts,* of course, are of legendary nature, but give a realistic image of the way people and religions might have moved in the region. Around the turn of the third century, a certain Pantainos is supposed to have undertaken a missionary journey from Egypt to India, but found that Christianity was already established there, and that local Christians read the scriptures in Hebrew,[63] implying that the faith must have come by way of Mesopotamia, and perhaps that missionary work had taken place in the Jewish diaspora in India.

In the fourth century, two church historians provide reports about links between Christianity and commercial activities. Rufinus, writing about the conversion of the kingdom of Aksum in modern Ethiopia and Eritrea, circa 340-50, relates the story of Frumentius, a young boy from Tyre in modern Lebanon. He was captured and sold into slavery along with his companion Aedasius when their ship put in on the Aksumite coast in order to replenish its water supplies on the return journey from India. Eventually, the boys, being literate, were appointed stewards to the underage king Ezana. Frumentius used his influence to secure rights of worship and houses of assembly for Christian members of the Roman diaspora. Only after his manumission, following Ezana's majority, did he set out to convert the king and kingdom.[64] A similar process can be seen in Southern Arabia some years later (circa 356 CE), when the imperial emissary Theophilus was sent to the king of Himyar, with instructions to ask for permission to establish churches for visiting Roman traders. Three churches were eventually built at the expense of the Himyarite king: at the capital Saphar, in Aden, described as the most important market town, and at an unidentified

[62] *Acts of Judas Thomas* 2 = Albertus F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction - text - commentary,* Leiden: Brill, 1962.

[63] Euseb., *Hist. Ecc.* 5.10. = C.F. Cruse, *Eusebius' ecclesiastical history : complete and unabridged,* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998.

[64] Rufinus, *Hist. Ecc.* 10.9–11 = Phillip R. Amidon, *The church history of Rufinus of Aquileia, books 10 and 11,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

port at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.[65] This suggests the presence of Christians in merchant diasporas before the formation of official church organizations.

By the sixth century, churches were present along most coasts of the western Indian Ocean (fig. 4). The *Christian Topography* of Kosmas Indikopleustes reports a church of Persian (Sasanian) Christians in Sri Lanka, maintaining ecclesiastical ties with Mesopotamia circa 518 CE. Significantly, Christianity is reported to be a religion practiced by the local diaspora, and thus presumably connected to trade, while the natives are described as belonging to a different religion.[66] Kosmas also reports Christian communities on the Malabar and Konkan coasts, on Socotra, in South Arabia and in Ethiopia.[67] Archaeologically, churches are attested in the Roman Red Sea ports of Aila and Berenikê and the Aksumite port of Adulis.[68] Nestorian sources attest the existence of churches on the eastern and southern shores of the Persian Gulf from the fourth century continuing through the ninth century,[69] and archaeological remains of Christian monasteries have been found in several locations in the Gulf, seemingly indicating continued or even increased activity and prosperity into the early Islamic period.[70] In the eastern Indian Ocean and also along the overland trade routes through Cental-Asia, Nestorian churches continue to thrive at least until the 13th century.[71]

These churches had practical significance for Christian merchants, allowing them to link up with co-religionists during their stays in Indian Ocean ports. Indications of a close relationship between Christian traders and churches are

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65 Philostorgius, *Hist.Ecc.* 3.4. = Phillip R. Amidon, *Philostorgius : church history*, Atlanta, GA : Society of Biblical Literature, 2007; D.T. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in antiquity, volume II: from Alexander the Great to the coming of Islam,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 330-333.

66 Kosmas. *Top. Chr.* 11.14. = Wanda Wolska-Conus, *Topographie chrétienne*, Paris: Cerf, 1968. The term used is *allophyloi*, "belonging to a different tribe", but from the context it is clear that this refers to religious affiliation.

67 Kosmas. *Top. Chr.* 3.65-66.

68 Roberta Tomber, 'Bishops and Traders: The Role of Christianity in The Indian Ocean During the Roman Period', in Janet Starkey, Paul Starkey and Tony Wilkinson, eds., *Natural Resources and Cultural Connections of the Red Sea*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2001, pp. 220-1.

69 Aziz S. Atiya, *A history of Eastern Christianity*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968, p. 258; Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in antiquity,* pp. 242-247, 330-333. J.-F. Salles, '*Fines Indiae,* Ard el-Hind. Recherches su le devenir de la mer Erythrée', in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. Edward Dabrowa, Krakow: Unwersytet Jagielloński, 1994, pp. 175-182.

70 Peter Hellyer, 'Nestorian Christianity in the Pre-Islamic UAE and Southeastern Arabia', *Journal of Social Affairs* 18/72 (2001), pp. 80-99. R.A. Carter, 'Christianity in the Gulf during the first centuries of Islam', *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 19:1 (2008), pp. 71-108. Derek Kennet, 'The decline of eastern Arabia in the Sasanian period', *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 18:1 (2007), pp. 86–122.

71 K. Kevonian, 'Un itineraire armeniian de la mer de Chine', in *Historie de Barus, Sumatra. Le Site de Lobu Tua I. Etudes et Documents*, ed. C. Guillot, Paris: Arcipel, 1998, p. 77.

plentiful,[72] although for the most part indirect. Potentially, this was not only a spiritual matter, but also a way to find people whom you could trust. Christianity was an exclusive religion, not in the sense that it was difficult to join, but in the sense that once you were in, you were not supposed to take part in other religious cults. This means that Christian merchants who took their faith seriously would be cut off from important arenas of interaction with pagan countrymen, including communal meals in connection with sacrifices. In a situation where Christianity was a minority religion, as it always remained in the Indian Ocean, and primarily a diaspora religion, as several of the sources cited above seem to indicate, it is reasonable to assume that this exclusivity would foster strong social cohesion with coreligionists, even in absence of other social ties. Similar to the practices documented in the medieval letters from the Cairo Geniza, it is possible that Christian communities could serve as meeting places – network nodes – where transactions of business, credit and information could take place.

Should the Christian merchant communities in the Indian Ocean be considered a trading diaspora? The network clearly lives up to two of the criteria held forth by Brubaker,[73] namely dispersion and distinctive identity, but as this identity was connected to religion rather than place of origin, the network fails to meet the third criterion of a common homeland, at least in the visible world, although there was certainly a perceived otherworldly homeland awaiting the faithful after death. Also the Christian commercial network was polycentric, thus resembling Aslanian's concept of a circulation society more closely than Curtin's trading diaspora.[74] After the Nestorian schism of 431 CE, the Indian Ocean churches followed either the Roman or the Persian rite, and maintained ecclesiastical ties with either Alexandria (and thus Constantinople) or Ctesiphon respectively. The two church organizations were competing fiercely for position and influence, but we do not know how important the schism was to ordinary believers. The presence of Christian merchants seems to have preceded that of formal church organization in the cases of Aksum (Ethiopia/Eritrea) and Himyar (South Arabia),[75] and arguably, the more important thing for a merchant was whether there was a community of Christians who he could link up with in ports of call or not than whether the church followed the Persian or the Roman rite.

In sum, the potential Christian networks glimpsed in sources from the fourth to the sixth century CE is clearly different from those described in the *Periplus*

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72 Carter, 'Christianity in the Gulf'; B.C. Colless, 'The traders of the pearl', *Abr Nahrain* 9 (1970), pp. 17–38.

73 Brubaker, 'The 'diaspora' diaspora', pp. 5-6.

74 Curtin, *Cross Cultural Trade in World History*; Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, pp. 1-22.

75 Eivind H. Seland, 'Trade and Christianity', pp. 80-83.

and reconstructed from the Palmyrene epigraphic record. While the other networks can be described as trading diasporas oriented towards a homeland, the Christian network was polycentric, all nodes having the same rank seen from the merchant's perspective (although not from the church's point of view). The Christian network had limited access: You had to be a believer in order to get in, and once you were in, you were not supposed to take part in competing religious networks. This potentially impeded interactions with non-Christian merchants from the same geographical region, ethnic group or nationality, thus probably leading to a strong degree of cohesion between network members.

Conclusion: overlapping social networks

Most people are able to maintain multi-faceted identities. This was also the case in the ancient world: Palmyrene merchants sailing out of Egypt and Mesopotamia were for instance proficient in Greek and Aramaic, in some cases also in Latin and Hebrew, and operated on both sides of the border between the Roman and Parthian Empire, even in times of conflict between the two. They were probably able to take part in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian networks described in the *Periplus,* but they also had an extra support in the ethnically based Palmyrene community, which was not open to outsiders. Christian and Jewish merchants from the Roman and Sasanian (Neo-Persian) empires, would surely have been able to interact with pagan countrymen when they were abroad, even if perhaps not without friction, but they also had access to religious networks. These networks were not oriented towards a homeland, were durable as well as flexible, and were also off limits to non-believers, thus fostering strong cohesion between those connected by them. In the case of the Jewish network, the ethnic element comes in as a third pillar, perhaps contributing towards explaining its longstanding success. The Christian network was not equally successful in the long run. Although Christianity continued to flourish in South India, Ethiopia, Egypt and Mesopotamia, links to commercial activities in the Indian Ocean were no longer evident after the rise of Islam in the Red Sea, and after the ninth century in the Gulf.[76] The existence of a Christian diaspora in the western Indian Ocean in late antiquity nevertheless seems to anticipate the Jewish and Islamic merchant communities of later periods. It represents a way of organizing trade that is distinct from the networks based on geography and ethnicity attested in the other case-studies outlined above. The use of portable religion as a cohesive element in cross-cultural trade thus seems to be a solution to the challenges of cross-cultural trade going back into the pre-Islamic period.

[76] Carter, 'Christianity in the Gulf'; B.C. Colless, 'The traders of the pearl', pp. 17–38.

Why was the Christian network eclipsed? Again, Granovetter's insights on the strengths of weak ties might provide a clue. From the perspective of the merchant, ties of portable religion were of the weak kind, as the cohesion with otherwise unknown co-believers, strong as it may be during worship, declined very rapidly with distance in time and space. Christian mercantile networks, however, increasingly depended on hierarchical church organisations, backed or tolerated by political authorities as the religion became recognized and formalized in late antiquity. These church organizations were networks based on strong and formal ties, very vulnerable to fragmentation in the Indian Ocean setting, where the imperial backing available in the Roman Empire and to a certain extent even in the Sasanian world,[77] did not exist. Jewish and Islamic networks on the other hand, were polycentric, when viewed as religious networks as well as commercial.

In the first centuries CE, the western Indian Ocean was the hub of old-world exchange, and understanding the mechanisms of Indian Ocean commerce is vital to appreciate the scope and nature of proto-global interaction within the ancient *oikumene*. Approaching merchant communities, whether trading diasporas or circulation societies, in terms of social networks, highlights the importance of ties between members or nodes. Investigating these ties sheds light on how such networks worked, and the theoretical dimension facilitates comparison with other geographical and empirical settings. Above, an attempt has been made to show how different models of organization had influence on the accessibility, strength and vulnerability of networks, and how merchants could draw on multiple networks in order to establish the necessary infrastructure of trust. The Indian Ocean networks encountered in the ancient period bear strong resemblance to the organizational solutions familiar from more recent and more amply documented periods. With regard to global history, the most striking aspect of this is perhaps the resilience and longevity of such answers to the challenges to safety of life and property inherent to premodern trade.

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77 Despite periodic persecutions, especially during conflicts with the Roman Empire, the Nestorian church in Persia and Mesopotamia was generally tolerated, and, after 410 CE, actively supported by the Sasanian government as a useful rival to the Roman church. S.P. Block, 'Christians in the Sasanian Empire: a case of divided loyalties', in *Religion and identity*, ed. Stuart Mews, (Studies in Church History, 18), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp. 1-19; Hellyer, 'Nestorian Christianity', pp. 86-89.

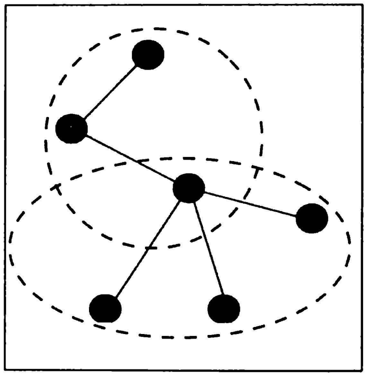


Fig 1. Network with six nodes and two clusters centred on nodes A and B

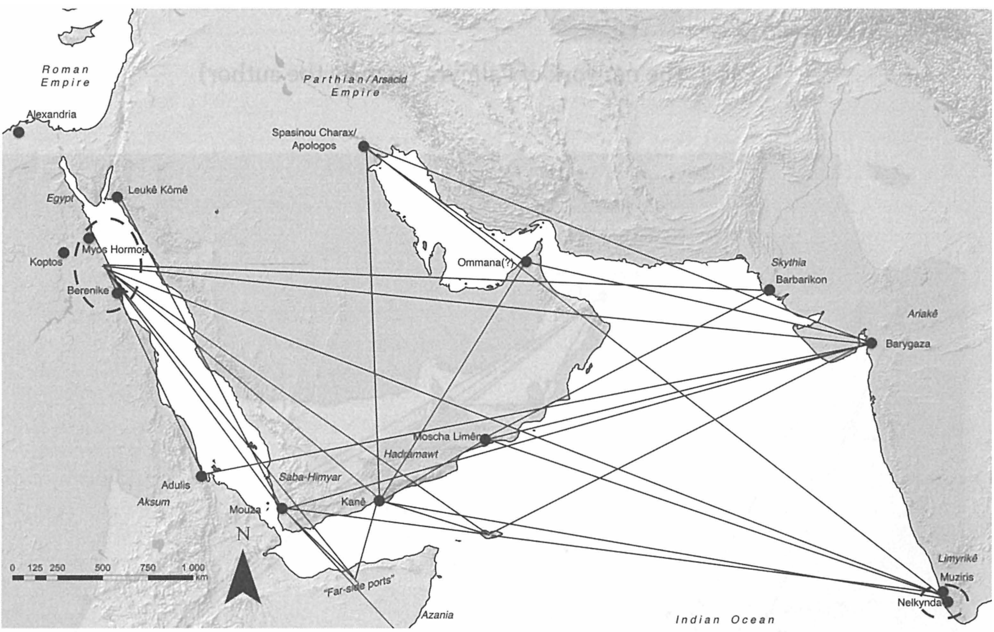


Fig 2. Indian Ocean networks in the *Periplus* (map by the author)

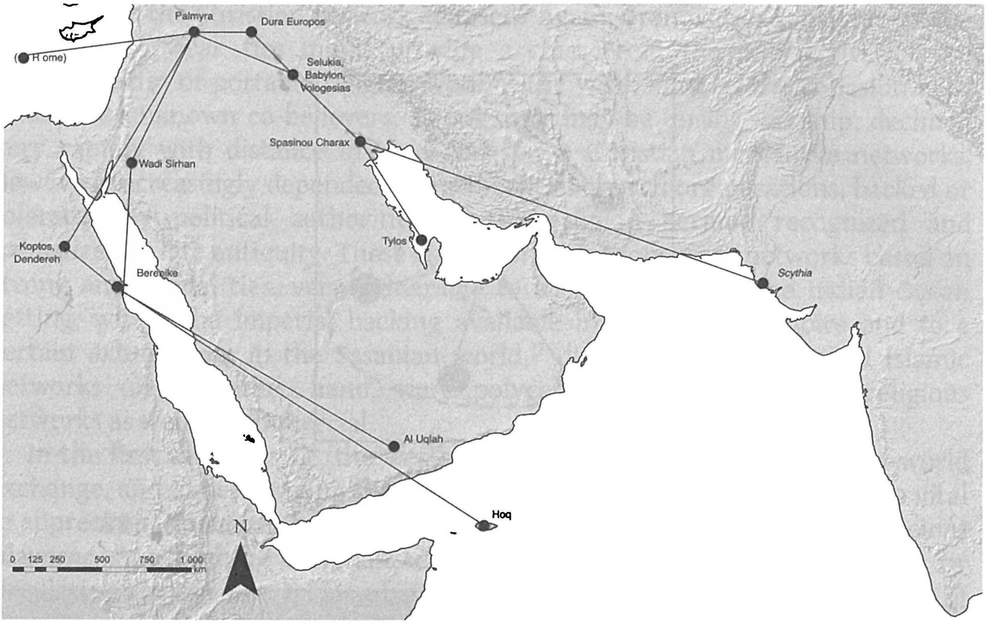


Fig. 3. The network of Palmyra (map by the author)

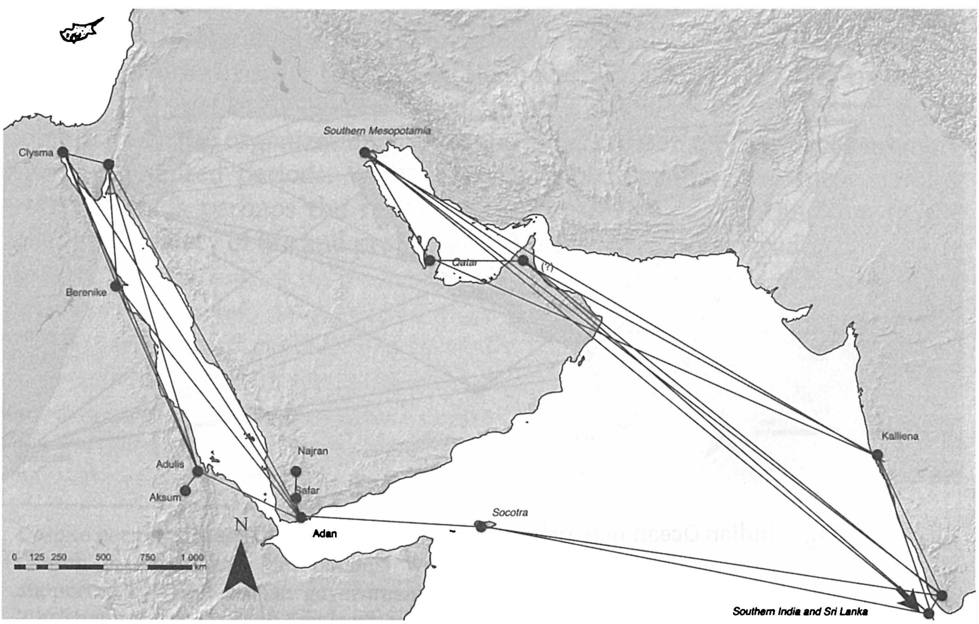


Fig. 4. Potential Christian network (map by the author)